

CRIMEA

The Story of Crimea
and the Mennonites who lived there

by
Helmut T Huebert

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CRIMEA

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CRIMEA

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Why write a book about Crimea?

For a number of reasons.

Mennonites lived in Crimea - in about 55 villages and 38 estates. Unlike most other Mennonite regions, there was no specific colony, but there were certainly many interesting people and a number of institutions in both the villages and the estates.

World history was made in Crimea.

The Crimean War of 1853-1856 did not directly involve Mennonites, but was of great interest. The most famous person involved in the war was not a general, but a nurse, Florence Nightingale, who was in the forefront of developing modern nursing techniques.

The Yalta Conference of February 4-11, 1945, also did not directly involve Mennonites, but the decisions reached by the leaders at the conference certainly effected the lives of thousands of people, including many Mennonites.

Crimea represents a microcosm of Mennonite history. There were many Mennonite churches as well as schools and other such institutions in Crimea.

The Bible School in Tschongraw was supported by a wide constituency, not only Mennonite Brethren.

Typical Mennonite narrow-mindedness was demonstrated in a number of instances. The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren could not work together with the regular Mennonite Brethren. Regular Mennonite Brethren baptized by immersing backwards. That was not good enough for the Krimmer. They had to immerse forwards.

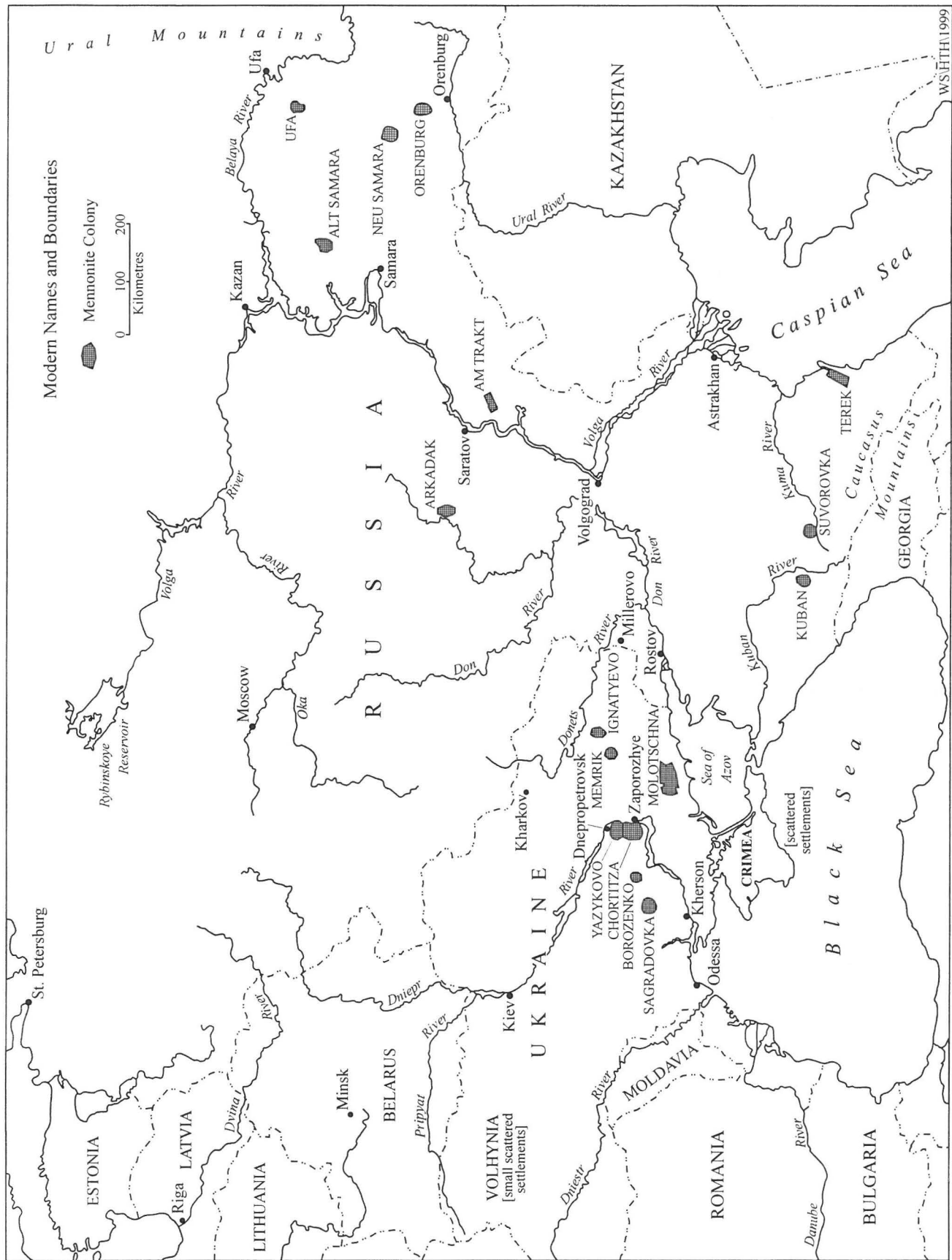
There appeared to be a considerable number of people who had the capacity to be leaders among those living in Crimea. Examples that come to mind are David Gerhard Duerksen, Peter Martin Friesen, Abraham Jakob Kroeker, Abraham Heinrich Unruh and Benjamin Heinrich Unruh.

Martin Duerksen (Durksen) has compiled an extensive collection of information in his book "*Die Krim war unsere Heimat*." I have used this book extensively in the preparation of the present manuscript. "*Die mennonitischen Siedlungen der Krim*" by H Goerz, and its English translation have also been very helpful.

None of my own relatives lived or worked in Crimea, but I still found it to be a very interesting chapter of Mennonite history.

Originally many sources called it "The Crimea." More recently it is simply labeled "Crimea."

Helmut T Huebert
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
July 2013



Mennonite Colonies in Ukraine and Russia
 [Not all of the smaller colonies shown]

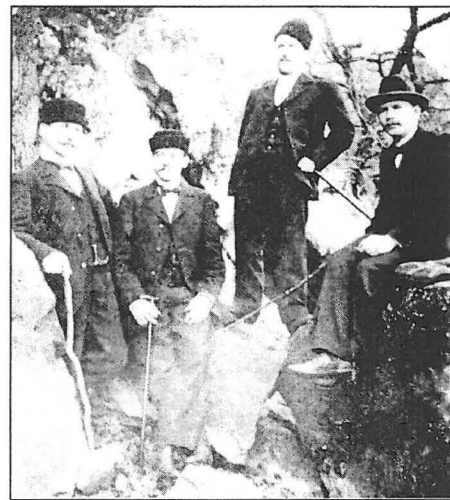
Crimean Scenery



Students of Karassan *Zentralschule* touring Crimean mountains in May, 1911



Picnic in Crimea



Touring Crimea

HISTORY OF CRIMEA

HISTORY OF CRIMEA

It should be noted that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this region was called "The Crimea." It is now more commonly known simply as "Crimea."

Crimea is currently an autonomous republic governed by the Constitution of Crimea in accordance with the laws of Ukraine. The capital and administrative centre is Simferopol, which is also its largest city. The area of Crimea is 26,200 square km, and the population in 2007 was estimated at 1,973,185. In 2001 58.32% of the population was Russian, 24.32% Ukrainian, 12.10% Crimean Tatars, the remaining 5% a mixture of German and other ethnic groups. By this time (2013) there are no Mennonites left in Crimea.

Crimea is a peninsula protruding from the northern coast of the Black Sea. It is connected to the continent of Europe by the 5-7 km wide Isthmus of Perekop. At its eastern tip the Kerch Peninsula is directly opposite the Taman Peninsula of the Russian mainland.

The people of Ukraine, now and throughout its history, have been quite separate and different from those of both Russia and Ukraine. The Mennonites who lived there, however, were quite closely tied to those of southern Ukraine, particularly those of the Molotschna Colony.

Crimea has a long history of occupation by a wide variety of people.

- Inland regions inhabited by Scythians and Taures in BC period
- Greek settlers, before second century BC, a number of cities including Chersonesos founded
- The extensive ruins of Chersonesos can still be seen near Sevastopol
- Bosporan Kingdom, second century BC
- Romans, first-third centuries AD
- Goths, 250 AD
- Huns, 376 AD
- Bulgars, fourth-eighth centuries AD
- Khazars, eighth century AD
- Kievan Rus, tenth-eleventh centuries AD
- Byzantine Empire, 1016 AD
- Kipchaks, 1050 AD
- Mongols, 1237 AD
- Venice, thirteenth century AD
- Genoa, seized the Venetian settlements and controlled them for two centuries, thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD
- After destruction of Golden Horde in 1441, Crimean Tatars founded the independent Crimean Khanate
- Ottoman Empire, fifteenth-eighteenth centuries AD
- 1774 Crimean Khans came under Russian influence
- 1783 entire Crimea annexed to Russian Empire, became part of Taurida Governorate
- Crimean War October 1853 - February 1856; Britain, France, Ottoman Empire and Sardinia against Russia. The main conflict was in Crimea, but there were also hostilities in Western Anatolia, the Caucasus, Baltic Sea, White Sea and the Pacific Ocean. In Russia

it was known as the “Eastern War.” Russia was defeated. Black Sea was basically demilitarized

- Mennonites started to move to Crimea about 1862, many coming from the Molotschna Colony. Eventually there were 55 villages and 38 estates, total Mennonite population about 5,000 people
- 1869 *Krimmer Mennoniten Brudergemeinde* founded by Jakob A Wiebe. Most members migrated to the USA in the 1870s
- During the Russian Civil War Crimea changed hands a number of times. Intermittently it was the stronghold of the anti-Bolshevik White Army
- According to the treaty ending World War I, Ukraine, including Crimea, was briefly occupied by Germany. So it was that Crimea was occupied by German troops from February to December 1918
- Last stand of the White Army of General Pyotr Wrangel against Nestor Makhno and the Red Army was in 1920.
- Wrangel and many of his troops escaped to Turkey 14 November 1920
- Upon the defeat of the White Army about 50,000 prisoners of war and civilians were executed by the Reds, by shooting or hanging. There were undoubtedly a considerable number of Mennonites among the civilians executed
- 18 October 1921 the Crimean Autonomous Socialist Republic was created, which became a part of the Soviet Union
- Two severe famines were experienced in southern Russia, including Crimea
 - The 1921-1922 famine produced by crop failure and drought
 - The 1932-1933 famine deliberately caused by the government of Joseph Stalin
- 1918-1924 Tschongraw Bible School functioned, closed by government decree in 1924 Teachers were able to escape to Canada, and were instrumental in establishing the Winkler Bible School
- 1941 many Mennonites, often as complete villages, were exiled to the Central Asian republics. Tschongraw, notably, escaped, with many inhabitants eventually to Canada
- During World War II most of Crimea was occupied by the Germans, until 1944
- After being “freed” by the Russians, the entire Tatar population was exiled to central Asia; 46% of the deportees died of hunger and disease
- By the end of 1944 the ethnic cleansing of all groups was complete
- Yalta Conference February 4-11, 1945. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin attended
- In 1945 the Crimean ASSR was transformed into the Crimean Oblast (province) of Russia
- In 1954 Crimea was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR
- With collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimea became part of the newly independent Ukraine
- Now Crimea is Autonomous Republic of Crimea under its own and the Ukrainian constitutions.
- In 1995 an agreement was reached in which four-fifths of the Russian Black Sea Fleet would remain under Russian control, the remaining fifth was Ukrainian
- The lease regarding the use of the port of Sevastopol by the Russian navy has been extended by the Ukrainian parliament until 2042.

CITIES OF CRIMEA

Simferopol and Sevastopol are the two major cities of Crimea. Their descriptions and histories, including the involvement of the Mennonites, are listed in separate articles.

Total urban population in Crimea is about 1,027,000, which represents somewhat over half of the total population of 1,973,185 (about 52%).

Other smaller cities of Crimea played a lesser role in Mennonite life.

YEVPARATORIA

The first settlement in the area was by Greek colonists about 500 BC - it was then called Kerkinitis. From the seventh to the tenth century AD it was a Khazar settlement. It was briefly occupied by British, French and Turkish troops during the Crimean War; it was then the site of the Battle of Eupatotia.

Yevpatoria is now a major Black Sea port, with a population of about 123,000. It is a resort with spas and mud lakes and is famous for its beaches.

FEODOSIYA

Feodosiya was founded as Theodosia by Greek colonists from Miletos in the sixth century BC. It came under the influence of Genoa for part of its history. During the middle ages it was dominated by the Tatars, and was renamed Caffa

The Black Death was introduced to Europe through Feodosiya in 1387

Feodosiya was one of the cities visited by Johann Cornies in the 1820s in his travels through Crimea to sell agricultural products from the Molotschna

Dr Peter Sawatzky moved to Feodosiya in the 1920s to allow his children to have a good education - so there must have been good schools in the city.

Feodosiya is a port city on the southern coast of Crimea, and is also known as a resort. At the present (2006) it has a population of 85,000, with principal industries being tourism, agriculture and fisheries. The Mennonite village of Ogus-Tobe is near the city.

YALTA

Yalta is a resort city on the southern coast of Crimea, probably best known for the conference which was held there by the Big Three on February 4-11, 1945. Its climate is humid subtropical. There are many vineyards and orchards in the area.

In the nineteenth century it became a fashionable resort, and was associated with royalty; Nicholas II built the Livadia Palace there in 1911. Leo Tolstoy spent his summers there; Anton Chekhov bought a house there in 1898. Even during Communist times it was used as a resort.

The longest trolleybus line in Europe runs from Simferopol to Yalta.

The 2001 population of Yalta was 80,500, of which 65.5% are Russians, 25.7 Ukrainians, 1.6% Belarussians and 1.3 % Crimean Tatars.

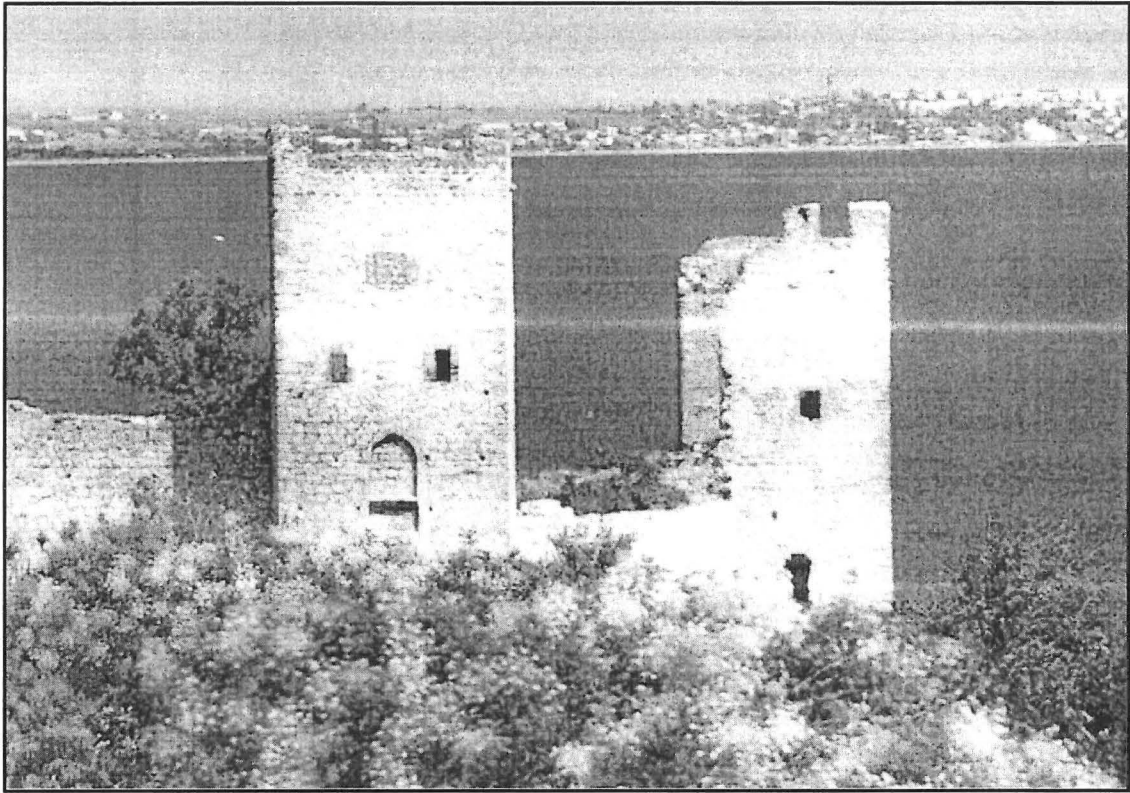
DZHANKOY

Dzhankoy is a transportation hub in north Crimea, with two major railway lines and two highways passing through. There are also automobile, re-enforced cement and fabric factories. There are professional technical schools in this city of about 36,000 (2012). It was likely established about 1805, when the population was listed at 173.

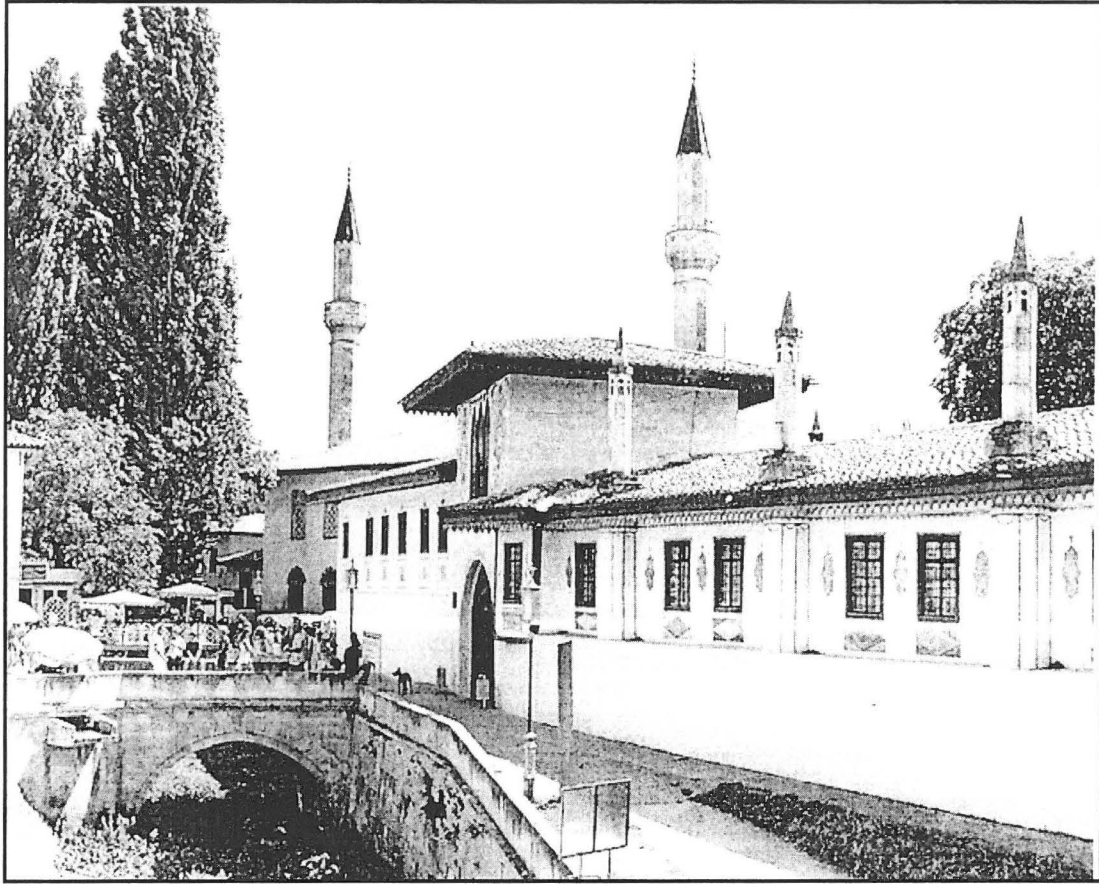
BAKHCHISARAY

First mentioned in 1502, then mentioned as the new Khan's residence in 1532. Since then it has been the capital of the Crimean Khanate and the centre of the political life of the Crimean Tatar people. It became an ordinary town when the region was conquered by the Russian Empire in 1783.

Currently it is the site of the Khan's Palace, as well as the Uspensky Cave Monastery. The population is about 33,800.



Feodosiya Castle and city



North entrance, Bakhchisaray

SIMFEROPOL

Simferopol is a city located in south central Crimea, on the small Salgir River. It is at 350 metres above sea level, coordinates are 44°57N, 34°6E and its area is 107 square kilometres. Temperatures in January and February can dip to just below 0°C, while July and August reach 36 or 37°C. As of 2006 the population was 340,000.

The present city has within its boundaries an important archeological site known as Scythian Neapolis. It was a settlement that existed from the end of the third century BC until the second half of the third century AD. It was the centre of the Crimean Scythian tribes, and ruled over a small kingdom covering the lands between the lower Dniepr River and Crimea. Neapolis was destroyed half way through the third century AD by the Goths. At excavation a large public building with columns was found, as well as a mausoleum and more than 70 burial sites of Scythian noblemen. One of the skeletons was that of King Skylur; another burial site was that of a Scythian queen.

The Tatar city of Ak Mechet (White Mosque) was established on the site in the fifteenth century A D. The Russians renamed the city Simferopol after the conquest of Crimea by Catherine II in 1784. It was the administrative centre of the region, reflected in its name. Simferopol means “city collector” in Greek. In 1802 the city became the administrative centre of the Taurida Governorate. In the 1820s and 1830s Simferopol was one of the markets used by traders from the Molotschna, such as Johann Cornies, to sell their agricultural products, hams, sausages, lard, butter and eggs.

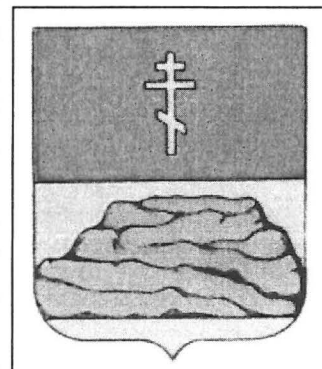
In 1850 there were 16 educational institutions in Simferopol, among them being the Provincial Crown *Gymnasium*.

During the Crimean War Simferopol was not actually a battlefield, but Russian Army reserves and a hospital were located in the city. More than 30,000 Russian soldiers were buried in the vicinity of the city. Mennonite wagons and drivers often brought supplies to the area. The Mennonites also accepted the care of 5,000 wounded soldiers, taking them back to facilities in the Molotschna.

Travel to and from Crimea, such as connecting to the Molotschna, was by road, basically a wide strip of land cleared to allow wagons and carriages to travel, but also wide enough to provide grass for the horses. The Perekoper Way went south from Perekop at the north end of Crimea, through Simferopol, and on to Sevastopol.

Starting in the mid 1800s Russia was starting to develop an extensive rail system. The Kharkov-Sevastopol railway, which ran through Simferopol, was completed in 1875. Two types of locomotives were built specifically to serve on the Kursk-Kharkov-Sevastopol Railway. Spat, with station Sarabus, was north of Simferopol on this line.

At the time of the flourishing of the Mennonites in south Russia, Simferopol seems to have been commonly frequented for medical treatments. The people may well have gone to the Dr Muehlenthal Hospital where various specialist surgeons operated. According to the frequency of its advertising, the *Wasserkur Abteilung* of the private hospital of Dr S Levin was also popular. In the



Simferopol Crest



St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in 1903

life story of a number of people the only contact with Simferopol mentioned was that they died there. It is likely that they were in a city hospital for medical treatment, and, not recovering, died there. Mennonites also attended educational institutions in Simferopol, particularly the university. The medical faculty at the university was not established until 1918; even so, at least nine Mennonites graduated as doctors from there.

In 1920 there were seven Mennonite medical students, two of them graduating as physicians in 1924, Nicolai and Gerhard Neufeld from Ufa.. There is record of only one Mennonite business located in Simferopol. Peter Reimer sold Keystone-Elgin watches and other jewelry, frequently advertising in the *Christlicher Familienkalender* early in the century, 1904-1905.

During World War I there were some Mennonite *Sanitaeter* opportunities in Simferopol. A fair number of Mennonite nurses served in Simferopol hospitals.

In the twentieth century Simferopol was again affected by wars in the region. Crimea was a White Army stronghold during the Civil War, with General Pyotr Wrangel having his headquarters in Simferopol.



University of Simferopol

On 13 November 1920 the Red Army finally captured the city. On 18 October 1921 it became the capital of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Simferopol suffered the usual deprivations with the Communist take over. The St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was destroyed by the Soviet government in 1930. The GPU (State Security Service) established a prison which was freely used to subdue and torture the surrounding population. In 1930, for example, 24 Mennonite families from Spat were rounded up on 24 April and taken to Simferopol, having been judged to be dangerous "kulaks." Within two days eight long trains left the city, taking their exiled passengers to the far Russian north. For some peculiar reason four families were not banished. They were given citizenship documents and the right to collect their belongings, if they could find them. The family of Abram J Klassen was one of the four granted these privileges, although Abram himself had already been exiled, and died 5 July 1931. Men from the Crimea were commonly imprisoned in Simferopol during the "Great Purge" of the late 1930s. Franz Teichrieb of Spat was in the GPU prison for a year before he was sent to the far reaches of Siberia. Jakob Janzen of Tschongraw was more fortunate, being released after three months of incarceration.

During World War II Simferopol was occupied by the German Army between 1 November 1941 and 13 April 1944. On one occasion, 13 December 1941, the *Einsatzgruppe D* under Otto

Ohlendorf killed at least 14,300 residents. In all over 22,000 people were killed, mostly Jews and Russians.

On 26 April 1956 Simferopol and the rest of Crimea was transferred from Russia to the Ukrainian SSR by Nikita Krushchev. After the collapse of the Soviet Union Simferopol became the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within independent Ukraine. The majority of the citizens of the city were ethnic Russians, but there were also significant Ukrainian and Tatar minorities.

Simferopol has a large railway station, being on the Sevastopol-Kharkov line, and has an international airport. Many tourists go through the city, largely on the way south to the nearby tourist resorts. The longest trolleybus line in the world connects Simferopol to Yalta on Crimea's Black Sea coast. It is also in the heart of the truck-farming and fruit-growing region. Industries include food processing, wine making, fruit canning, and the manufacture of machinery, machine tools, power station equipment and consumer goods. A recent survey comments that there is no high-rise building in Simferopol.

The Central State Archive of Crimea is situated in Simferopol, and has many records relating to Mennonite activities, since it was for many years the capital of the Taurida Governorate.

Adolph Joffe, a Russian Communist revolutionary, later a Bolshevik politician and diplomat, came from Simferopol. Yana Klochkova, a Ukrainian swimmer from the city, has won five Olympic gold medals in her career.

The St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral is now being reconstructed, to look exactly as it was before 1930. It was originally built in the early nineteenth century, to honor a wish of Czarina Catherine II. The first stone of the renewed foundation was laid in 2000. An old architect, Borys Isaiev, remembered the cathedral from the time before it was destroyed. He commented, "The church never failed to impress with its splendor...The sound of the cathedral's great bell carried and was heard in many villages in the Simferopol area. My soul rejoices in the expectation of the moment when I will hear the bells of Crimea's main sanctuary again."



Mennonite medical students in Simferopol in 1920. l to r back row Hermann Neufeld, Samara; Agatha Rempel, Gnadenfeld; Johann Strauss, Spat; front row Nicholas J Neufeld, Ufa; Maria Rempel (sister of Agatha), Gnadenfeld; Anna Martins, Eupatoria, Crimea; Gerhard Neufeld (brother of Nicholas), Ufa



Students at the *Lehrerseminar* in 1924, back row, 4th from left Sergy Scharkov; captain hat, Schaefer; middle row, white shirt, Johann (Hans) Duerksen

SEVASTOPOL

Sevastopol is near the site of the ancient Greek colony of Chersonesus, founded in 421 BC as a democratic city state. It was the most important Greek colony in Crimea until Scythians overran the region and forced it to become a protectorate of King Mithradates VI. This lasted from 179 to 63 BC. In the first century AD the region became part of the Roman Empire and in the fourth century was renamed Korsun, being part of the Byzantine Empire.

In the Middle Ages Korsun was a large trading and political centre, playing an important role in the economic and cultural life of the region. It was a Genoese trade colony until it was destroyed in 1399 by a Tatar invasion.

The modern city of Sevastopol was founded as a city and port by Catherine II on the site of the Tatar village of Akhtiar after Crimea was

annexed by Russia in 1783. It was strongly fortified and in 1804 became the chief base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Between 1797 and 1826 the settlement actually reverted back to its original Tatar name of Akhtiar.

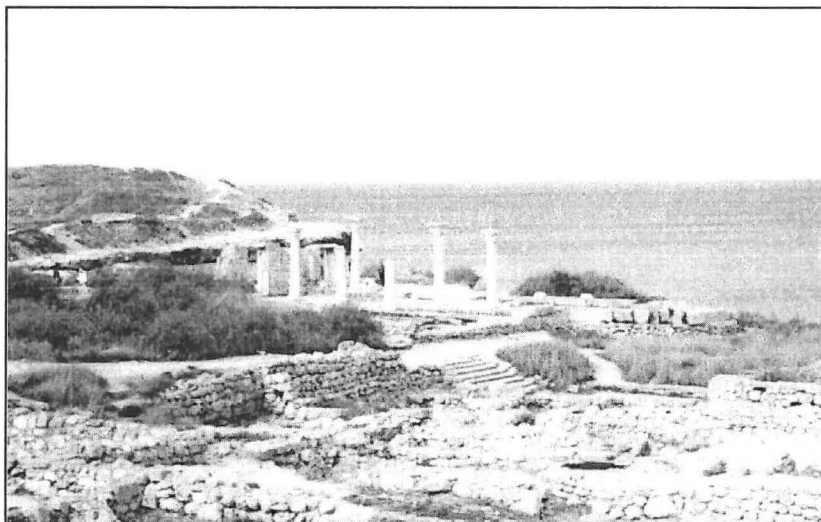


Sevastopol Crest

In the 1820s and 1830s young Mennonite entrepreneurs such as Johann Cornies loaded up produce from the Molotschna and headed south to Crimea to sell their goods. Sevastopol was one of the cities on this circuit. They would then buy manufactured goods in the cities and take them back to the colonies.

In the Crimean War (1853-1856) Sevastopol was besieged by British, French, Turkish and Sardinian troops. The Russian resistance held out for 349 days, the hero of the land defense being General E I Totleben. The Russian fleet was scuttled by the Russians themselves to block the entrance to the harbour. One of the naval heroes of the war was Admiral Paul Nakhimov, commander of the Russian navy on the Black Sea. In 1853 he had destroyed the Turkish squadron at Sinop. He was killed in the siege of the city in 1855. Leo Tolstoy recorded the heroic efforts of the defenders in "The Tales of Sevastopol." He himself fought in the ranks of the besieged. The French successfully stormed the fortress of Malakhov on the south shore of the bay in September of 1855, and three days later the Russians abandoned the city.

After the cessation of hostilities the terms of peace were signed in Paris on 30 March 1856. Sevastopol declined in importance as a military base and its fortifications were dismantled. With



Chersonesus - ruins of a church

repeated conflicts in the area, however, fortifications were rebuilt after 1871, and in 1890 Sevastopol again became a chief naval base.

Starting in the mid 1800s Russia was starting to develop an extensive rail system. They tended to emphasize the regions where commodities could then easily be transported to ports. Sevastopol came into this category. The Kursk-Kharkov-Sevastopol Railway was completed by 1875. Two types of locomotives were developed specifically for this line.

In the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, most battles were won by the Japanese, with a particularly significant defeat of the Russian Navy in the Battle of Tsushima Straits in 1905. For no logical reason at all, the Jews were blamed for these defeats, so as a result pogroms broke out in many cities, with Jews being killed and their property destroyed. Such a pogrom was being incited in Sevastopol on 21 October 1905. Peter M Friesen left his sick bed, went to the market place where the mob was collecting and stepped onto a vehicle in the middle of the crowd. He pled for his fellow citizens to show love as Christians. The crowd miraculously dispersed.

The Sevastopol sailors mutinied during the 1905 uprisings. Sailors from the Black Sea Fleet went ashore in 1918 and terrorized districts as far north as the Molotschna Mennonite Colony. In 1920 General Pyotr N Wrangel had his headquarters in the city in the last stand of the White Army against the Communists. With the Red Army closing in, he left Sevastopol aboard the cruiser *General Kornilov* on 14 November; in all, 146,000 people were evacuated to Constantinople.

There never was a great Mennonite presence in Sevastopol, although Peter M Friesen lived there for 13 years (1898-1911). In 1902, in addition to his own family, Friesen indicated that they had 17 boarders in their house. Most of these were students in secondary schools, teacher training schools and nursing schools. For a time, 1904 to 1910, there was an officially organized Mennonite church in Sevastopol, the "Sevastopol Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood." The establishment of this group was at the initiative of Friesen, and they also met in the Friesen home.

Friesen was also involved in political developments. He was one of the principal movers behind the "Union of Freedom, Truth and Peace" Party which was organized shortly after the October Manifesto of 1905, and was sometimes referred to as the "Friesen Party." The Kadet Party, also interested in reform, had a Sevastopol central committee. By many, Sevastopol was considered to be the centre of sectarian activity.

During World War II Sevastopol was again besieged, this time by invading land-based German and Rumanian armies. It fell on 3 July 1942 after eight months of resistance, during which time the city was virtually reduced to rubble. After it was recaptured by the Red Army on 9 May 1944, reconstruction began. Sevastopol was one of nine cities named "Hero City" of the Soviet Union because of the staunch resistance it had displayed against the invaders.

In 1954 the whole Crimea, including Sevastopol, was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR, then it became part of the independent Ukraine in 1991. In 1995 an agreement was implemented in which four-fifths of the Russian Black Sea Fleet would remain under Russian control, and in 1997 a further agreement allowed Russia to base its fleet at Sevastopol for the next 20 years.

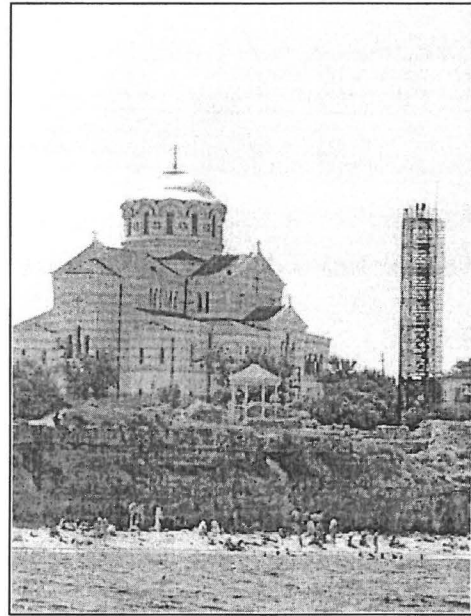
Sevastopol is a port and a major naval base. The harbour has been given over to the navy, which controls the Black Sea and the Bosphorus, so commercial vessels no longer use the deep sea natural harbour. Industries include ship building, lumber milling, food processing and manufacture of bricks and furniture. It is also a popular tourist destination, especially for people from the CIS. A panorama, created by Franz Roubaud, depicting scenes from the Crimean War, was restored after

World War II, and is a site frequently visited by tourists who are interested in history.

In 2004 the population of Sevastopol was 328,600, area was 864 square kilometres, and the geographic coordinates 44° 36 N and 33° 31 E. Elevation within the city is up to 100 metres. While Crimea has mild temperatures, in winter there can be snow in Sevastopol.



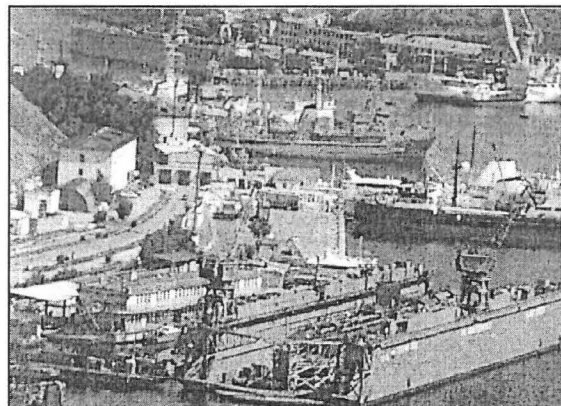
View of Artillery Bay from Cape Khrustalny



St Vladimir Cathedral



Russian Navy Day July 2005



Naval installations, Southern Bay

THE CRIMEAN WAR (1853 - 1856)

The Crimean War was a conflict between the Russian Empire on the one side, and an alliance of France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Sardinia on the other. The hostilities were actually part of a long-standing struggle to decide the supremacy in the Middle East and the major influence over many of the territories of the declining Ottoman Empire.

The most dramatic part of the war occurred on the Crimean peninsula itself, but there was also conflict in western Anatolia, the Caucasus, the Baltic Sea, the northern White Sea and even the Pacific Ocean.

The actual underlying reasons for the conflict were vague at best. Russia wanted to continue its influence in the Balkans and the Middle East. Britain wanted to bar Russia from the Mediterranean Sea, having a pathological fear that this would jeopardize the status of British control of the area and possibly interfere with the trade route to India.

The Russian fleet destroyed most of the Ottoman Black Sea Fleet in the Battle of Sinop on 30 November 1853. This provided the excuse for Britain and France to declare war on Russia, on the side of the Ottoman Empire, on 28 March 1854. In September of 1854 the allied fleet started transporting armies to Crimea. Since the Russian Black Sea fleet was based in Sevastopol, the allies laid siege to this port. The Russians scuttled some of their vessels to function as block-ships, using the guns and men to reinforce the batteries on shore in Sevastopol. The allied troops landed in Eupatoria, north of Sevastopol; the Russians attacked their supply base at Balaclava on 25 October 1854, but the attack was rebuffed. It is from this battle that "The Charge of the Light Brigade" was made famous by a poem written by Alfred Lord Tennyson; the term "The Thin Red Line" also stemmed from an action in this battle. Then on 5 November 1854 the Russians attempted to raise the siege of Sevastopol by attacking, but the allies were again victorious at the Battle of Inkerman.

Florence Nightingale and her 38 student nurses arrived in the area in November of 1854. They worked in a camp at Scutari, across the Black Sea from Crimea, near Constantinople, where the British wounded were sent. With improvement in hygiene, better food, and generally better living conditions, the death rate from wounds was greatly reduced among the British troops.

The allies surrounded Sevastopol and in October 1854 began all out bombardment of the city and its defences. In February of 1855 the Russians were defeated when they attacked the allied base at Eupatoria. Then followed a series of battles and bombardments around Malakoff Hill. On 5 September 1855 another bombardment was followed by an assault on 8 September. Sevastopol finally fell to the allies on 9 September 1855 after a year-long siege. Peace negotiations were begun in early 1856, resulting in the Treaty of Paris, which was signed 30 March 1856 at the Congress of Paris. It made the Black Sea a neutral territory, closing it to all warships, and prohibiting the presence of armaments on its shores. This marked a considerable setback to Russian influence in this region.

The Crimean War is well remembered for the tactical errors committed by both sides during the land campaign. It was one of the first wars to be documented, both by written reports and photographs. It was also the first "modern" war to use railways and electric telegraphs.

The number of troops, casualties and losses suffered are of some interest.

Russia:

Military strength: about 700,000

Losses: 220,000 dead

80,000 killed in action

40,000 died of wounds

100,000 died of other diseases

Allied Forces:

Military strength - total about 975,000

Ottoman Empire:

Military Strength - about 300,000

Losses estimated - 175,000 dead

France:

Military Strength - 400,000

Losses: 95,000 dead

10,240 killed in action

20,000 died of wounds

60,000 died of other diseases

Britain:

Military Strength - 250,000

Losses: total dead 21,097

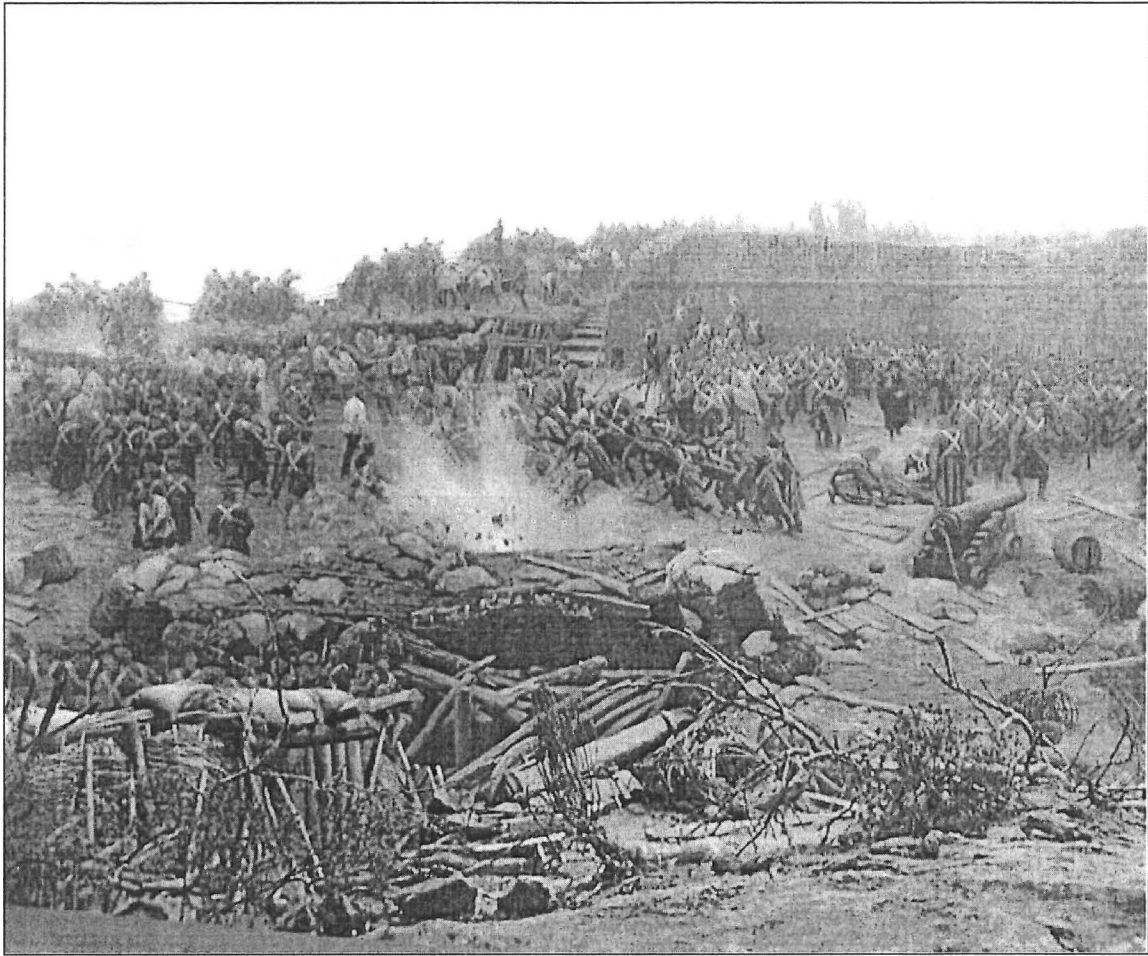
2,755 killed in action

2,019 died of wounds (this number is low compared to the French losses, probably because of good nursing care, as implemented by Florence Nightingale)

16,323 died of other diseases



Treaty of Paris (1856)



The Siege of Sevastopol
by Franz Roubaud (1904)



The Fall of Sevastopol
Capture of the Malakoff Tower



Russo-French Skirmish

MENNONITES and the CRIMEAN WAR

Hostilities of the Crimean War were from March 1854 to September 1855. Mennonites had no direct involvement in the war itself; at the time there were no Mennonites living in Crimea. Any contact they had was with the Russian forces, an army of 700,000 men and about 100,000 horses. The army depended on mobilization of the local population, and requisitioned its wagons, drivers and materials. Mennonites were ideally suited for the work; they were prosperous enough, they were situated on easy trade routes, living in south Russia near Crimea, and they had finely built wagons and well bred horses.

Many Mennonites made 7-8 major supply trips from the Molotschna to the front, often in poor weather conditions. They carried mainly hay and oats for the horses, food for the soldiers, and on occasion soldiers themselves, possibly also military supplies, even including ammunition. They often carried wounded soldiers on the way back. At one time more than 5,000 soldiers stayed in Molotschna homes and in temporary field hospitals run by the colony. In 1854 a total of 4,000 wagon loads were transported, increasing to 9,627 wagons in 1855. Most of the trips were to Sevastopol, Simferopol, Duvanka and Yeshna, although there were also other destinations.

Some Mennonites had a feeling of nationalism and loyalty, but the majority simply wished for peace, and contributed through a sense of duty and to alleviate suffering. The Molotschna contributed a considerable amount of cash (silver rubles) for the war and the upkeep of the field hospitals. Wagon drivers were usually old men or young boys. Some young men unfortunately came back with bad habits, such as smoking, drinking and swearing. The drivers also learned more about life, sometimes witnessing the horrors of war.

A few Mennonites used the war to make extra money, selling goods to the soldiers at a huge profit, but most actually lost a fair bit through the war. In 1854 a cholera epidemic struck the army; unfortunately the disease was not confined to the military, also spreading to the colonies.

The long term results of the Crimean War did directly involve the Mennonites. In analyzing the cause of the defeat, the Russian government concluded that many of the young men who would have been the best soldiers had escaped the draft. This was either because they bought their way out, or they had some special arrangement which excused them from service. The government was now moving toward implementing an absolutely universal draft. This was viewed by the Mennonites with considerable alarm.

Some Mennonites felt that a principle was a principle, and they would not waver from the non-resistant stance. Many of these chose to leave Russia before the government programs were implemented. About 8,000 migrated to Canada, where the non-resistant status was guaranteed. Another 10,000 left for the United States. The peculiarity in this move was that the United States guaranteed nothing. It seems that at least among some of the leaders, business opportunities were more important than religious principles.

Other Mennonites felt that there was some room to negotiate with the Russian government. Arrangements were made for alternate service to the country, largely in two forms. Forestry Service (*Forsteidienst*) was implemented, and would be put into practice during peace or war. Medical Orderly Service (*Sanitaetsdienst*) was to be implemented in times of war. The Forestry Service was begun in 1880, with eight camps being established in southern Russia.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE **(1820 - 1910)**

Even though she did not set foot on the Crimean peninsula, Florence Nightingale was probably the most famous person to have been involved in the Crimean War. She is best remembered for her work as nurse, contributing to the reform of medical conditions of the military field hospitals during the Crimean War and afterwards.

Florence Nightingale was born at the Villa Colombia, in Florence, Italy, on 12 May, 1820. Her parents, William Nightingale and Frances Smith were touring Europe at the time. Her older sister had been born in Naples the year before. Back in England the family lived in Derbyshire and Hampshire. Her early education was in the hands of a governess, but later her Cambridge trained father took over the responsibility. Florence became well acquainted with the classics, Euclid, Aristotle, the Bible and political matters. She was probably the most interested in mathematics. While her parents were Unitarians, Florence preferred the Church of England. She developed an interest in social issues, but her family was firmly against the idea of her gaining any hospital experience. Nursing was not considered to be a suitable occupation for a well-educated woman.

On tour of Europe and Egypt in 1849 Florence studied different hospital systems, then in 1850 she began training as a nurse at the Institute of St Vincent de Paul in Alexandria. She also visited hospitals in Germany and France. Upon return to London in 1853 she was appointed superintendent at the "Establishment for Gentlewomen during Illness" at No. 1, Harley Street.

The Crimean War began in March of 1854. A friend, Sidney Herbert, the British Secretary for War, asked Florence to oversee the introduction of nurses to military hospitals. This request likely came as a result of newspaper criticism of British medical facilities in the war. Florence arrived at Scutari, an Asian suburb of Constantinople, where the British hospital was located, with 38 nurses, on November 4, 1854.

Florence went about reforming the hospital system. Soldiers were lying on bare floors surrounded by vermin. Unhygienic operations were taking place. These factors made it easy to understand the high fatality rate among the wounded. Diseases such as cholera and typhus were rife in the hospitals. Improvement in the sanitary conditions and better diets, clean water, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables dramatically decreased the complications. Florence's fetish for demonstrating improvement mathematically and through diagrams undoubtedly helped the authorities to understand some of these factors. Whatever the specific statistics, the fact is that with the improvements implemented by Florence, the fatality rate of soldiers with wounds in the British Army was half that of the French Army during the same period of time.

After the conclusion of the Crimean War, Florence continued her interest in the health of soldiers, demonstrating the need for sanitary reform in all military hospitals. She even gained the attention of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, as well as the prime minister in this regard. In 1860 the Nightingale Training School and Home for Nurses was established at St Thomas's Hospital in London, opening with 10 students. Florence also wrote a considerable number of books and pamphlets, such as "Notes on Nursing" and "Notes on Hospitals."

Unfortunately Florence spent much of the remainder of her life bedridden, from a disease

which she is said to have contracted in Crimea. On reviewing the actual medical evidence it is highly likely that she need not have been in bed at all. She was probably suffering from depression, which did not require bed rest.

Florence Nightingale died 13 August 1910 at the age of 90. She is buried at St Margaret's Church, East Wellow, near Embly Park. She never married, believing that God had clearly marked her out to be a single woman.

The Crimean Monument, erected in Waterloo Place in London in 1915, was done in honor of her contributions to the Crimean War and the health of the army. There is also a memorial to Florence Nightingale in St Paul's Cathedral.



Florence Nightingale

BALACLAVA

Near the beginning of the Crimean War, British, French and Turkish troops had easily captured the town of Balaclava and established a base there. The Russians sent a large force from Sevastopol, about 10 km to the north-west of Balaclava, to reconquer the town. This resulted in the Battle of Balaclava, fought on October 25, 1854. The Russian attack failed, but both sides suffered heavy losses

During this battle a small brigade of British cavalry made a gallant, but tragically useless attack on a very strongly fortified Russian position. Actually less than a third of the 600 men of the famous Light Brigade made it back to their own lines. It is thought that the stupidity and personal rivalry of two high-ranking British officers were the chief cause of this tragedy. The incident was made famous by poet laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson.

This same battle also brought another British unit to fame. The 93rd Highlanders stood solidly against repeated attacks by a larger Russian force. The stand led to the 93rd Highlanders to be remembered in history as “the thin red line.”

The Charge of the Light Brigade

1

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
“Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!” he said.
Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

2

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
 Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

3

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
 Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,

Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred

4

Flashed all their sabers bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sab'ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the saber stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not,
Not the six hundred.

5

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

6

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

Composed in 1854 by Alfred Lord Tennyson, poet laureate of England,
after reading an account of the battle in a newspaper

MENNONITE
SETTLEMENTS
IN
CRIMEA

MENNONITE
VILLAGES
IN
CRIMEA

MENNONITE VILLAGES

In 1926 there were said to be 70 Mennonite settlements in Crimea

Occupying about 55,000 dessiatines

Population 4,900 people

We have listed 55 villages altogether, but there were not actually that many Mennonite villages at any one time; some were taken over by others, or even sold to other groups.

Muni, Sari-Bash and Baragon for example, were sold to German Lutherans.

Other villages were bought by Mennonites, for example Adshambet.

Many settlers were originally from the Molotschna, often the younger families, who otherwise would have had to be labourers or settle for other jobs in their own villages

Some from Chortitza, possibly some South German Mennonites from the Palatinate

Settlements began in the early 1860s, 1862 and thereafter

Settlements were not in closed colonies; instead villages and estates were scattered in many places

Spelling of the names is not consistent by different authors, so sometimes it is difficult to tell if they were describing the same or different places

Design of the house architecture of most of the ordinary farms was similar to that in the Molotschna

Building materials, however, were different

special stone derived from the sea bed was used for much of the construction, including the fences

roofs were often French tiles or painted tin

One could tell the Mennonite villages from the others by the large number of trees

Mennonite settlements were on both rented and purchased land

Most villages and estates were near transportation routes

Areas where most of the villages were located:

North and Northwest (North)

Central and Southern (Central)

Eastern (East)

1. Adshambet
 Settled originally by Lutherans, bought out by Mennonites
 Originally on rented land
 When time came to renegotiate the lease it was considered a Mennonite village
 School
 Ministers Kornelius Warkentin and Heinrich Wedel
2. Annovka (Annenfeld) (Central)
 Originally on land rented from Estate Owner Lustig
 Bought by Peter Janzen, and set up as a village
 20 farms; good land; nice school
 Steam mill built by P Janzen
 Founded late 1860s by members of the Kleine Gemeinde, from whom the Krimmer
 Mennonite Brethren Church emerged
 Founder of the KMB Jakob A Wiebe
 Together with the congregation, except for 3 families, he emigrated to the USA
 (Kansas) in the 1870s
3. Aratschick
 South of Borongar, over the tracks
 Nice orchard along the Salgir River
 School
 Minister Peter Ediger
4. Baragon (Central) a prosperous village, possibly on estate of Philipp Wiebe
 10 km east of Karassan
 Sold to German Lutherans at the turn of the century (1900)
5. Baschlitscha (Buslitscha)
 Village on the estate of Peter Heinrich Schroeder
6. Beckbuslatshi (Bek Bulatschi)
 Early 1890s; rented village on the estate of Peter Heinrich Schroeder
7. Borongar
 Opposite station Taschlickdais
 Some stony land
 School; good teachers
8. Bruderfeld
 Early 1860s about 5 families from Hierschau, Molotschna moved there
 In the mid 1870s they emigrated to the US, establishing the Bruderfeld Church
 in North/South Dakota
9. Burnak (North) tenant village, rented from estate owner
 Exact location not known
 Infertile rocky land, therefore poor
10. Burnash (North) tenant village, rented from estate owner
 Exact location not known
 Infertile rocky land, therefore poor
11. Busav (Busau?)

- 10 km from postal station Aibar
 2 km east of Busav-Aktachi
 A centre of the Mennonite Church, people who had come from the Molotschna
12. Busav-Aktachi (Ettingerbrunn) (North) smaller village closer to city of Yevpatoria (North)
 Owned by the people who lived there
 Busav-Aktachi Mennonite Church formed when the Karassan church split
 Included more than 7 villages in the region
 First elder Friedrich Raabe, deposed 1889
 Eventually new elder, H Martens, elected in 1901, died 1905
 Minister P Friedrichsen elected elder 1906, continuing on for 20 years
 Never had a building, but met in the various villages
13. Busav-Montenai (Montonaj) (North)
 Smaller village closer to the city of Yevpatoria (North)
 Soon after Sari-bash was sold, one farmer from the village bought a larger piece of land
 for his children about 30 km away; others followed, soon forming the village
 of Montenai or Busav-Montenai
 Owned by the people that lived there
14. Buslitscha
 Early 1890s; rented village on the estate of Peter Schroeder
15. Danilovka (Central) rented village on estate of Anton D Lustig
 2 km from Kurman-Kemeltschi station
 Rented villages usually looked poor
 Rent usually reckoned 1/3 or 3/10 of the yearly harvest
 The Jakob Regier family, wife Maria (nee Wall) with 4 children escaped from Crimea
 to Paraguay in 1930, Jakob originally migrated to Crimea, Maria was born in
 Sarabaschk in 1878
16. Diurmen (Djurmeng) (Schottenruh) (North), 25 km from Chongar Bridge
 Name changed from German during WWI
 In the 1860s a Mennonite, Abraham de Jager bought the first piece of land from a Scot
 Soon others came from the Molotschna, Muensterberg and Altona
 Houses in single file for over 1 km
 Farms 100 dess, 60 fathoms wide
 Forest planted across from the farms
 Large school in the middle of the village
 2 good teachers in succession, Johannes Voth and Heinrich Ediger, both from Gnadenfeld
 Rocky saline soil, some crop failures
 Good water supply, artesian wells
 Suffered more than other villages during the Revolution and Civil War, since it was near
 the main highway and the strait
 Completely pillaged by the back and forth movement of the armies
 Many inhabitants victims of famine and disease
17. Dschyaga Baschi
 Rented village on the estate of Peter Heinrich Schroeder

18. Dschav-Boryu (Dzchaga-Shekh-Eli) (Central) close to Karassan
Founded 1888 by 4 families
Before WWI three of the families bought out the share of their co-founder
Philipp Jakob Wiebe
Wiebe and his sons were murdered on the estate/village about 1918
19. Ebenfeld (Kurt-Itchiki) (North) short distance east of Diurmen
18 km from Station Dshangoj
Founded in the 1870s by Johann and Bernhard Wall
They bought 630 dess, and rented some additional land
Salt peter soil and level landscape prevented water from draining in the rainy season
Village was poor
Had a school
In 1922 a revival
In 1929, 13 families (63 individuals) were able to emigrate via Moscow, the other
20 families (92 individuals) were sent back
Among those who migrated to Paraguay was the Johann Wall family, wife Sara
(nee Harder) and four children
20. Falantush (North) short distance east of Diurmen
Founded in the early 1870s, land purchased for 4 R per dess
Village was poor
- 21.. Fernheim
Exact location not known
Probably eastern Crimea
- XX Franzfeld
Presumably settlers from Franzfeld, Molotschna
23. Jalatusch
7 farms, 30 km from Armjanski, cost 4R per dess
Soil somewhat saltpeterish, very flat, difficult to drain
Had a school
24. Kaban (North) smaller village closer to the city of Yevpatoria (North)
In the region of Busav
Owned by the people that lived there
25. Kadagai (Central) single row of farmyards
Cost 4R per dess
12 km from Station Kurman-Kemeltski, made shipping grain easy
Good land and water
Good school, forest side near the south end of the village
Went to church and *Zentralschule* in Karassan
In 1900 there were 15 farms, with land from 50-100 dess
Steam mill built in the 1909 by Gerhard J Wall
Some people were able to escape via Moscow to Canada in 1929/1930
26. Kara (Klein-Tschakmak)
Adjacent to Hochfeld

- Originally rented land; when lease expired the settlers bought the land
 School
 Ministers Jakob Harder and Johann Voth
27. Karakuch (North) tenant village, rented from estate owner
 Exact location not known
 Infertile rocky land, therefore poor
28. Karassan (Central) second largest Mennonite village in Crimea
 Founded 1865, in time one of the richest villages
 15 km from Kurman-Kemeltschi railway station
 Difficult beginnings; made trips to Molotschna to get bread
 Land extended to the Salgir River; said to be very good quality
 When established the land quota was 64 dess
 Further land purchases enlarged some of the farms to between 200 to 800 dess
 Some farms had land holdings outside the village
 Raised cattle and strong horses
 Houses large and beautiful, construction of limestone
 Roofs French tiles, some green painted tin
 Floor plans the same as Molotschna
 Consisted of very long single row of houses
 Each had orchard and vegetable garden, earlier also large vineyards
 Shade trees around houses and on street, acacia trees
 2 large community wells; large pumps purchased in England gave running water
 Karassan Mennonite Church, in charge of whole Crimea prior to division in 1880s
 In 1905 it had 846 members (later increasing considerably)
 Affiliates were Spat after 1882, Diurmen after 1884, Pasha-Chokmak after 1890
 2-room elementary school
Zentralschule (the first in Crimea); two large teacherages with vegetable gardens;
 founded in 1905; continued to operate with good results until the mid 1920s;
 for boys only
Maedchenschule with plans to build new one
 Large general store, lumber and iron business, bookstore, all founded and owned by
 J Janzen
 Large steam mill owned by Tjart and Fast before WWI
 Brick factory, also produce French roof tiles - Gerhard Wall
 Also some Anwohner, not enough to complete a street, many were craftsmen
29. Kasantschi
 Close to and west of Kitai
 Possibly actually an estate
 Originally rented by Jakob Konrad, then in 1908 bought by Hermann Neufeld
 of Halbstadt
30. Kiptschak
 Established by Johann Janzen 1913
 Janzen bought 2,500 dess near Station Biejuk-Onlar, also near Tschongraw

- Consisted of 8 yards, 4 on each side of the street
- School in the middle; teacher Peter Schellenberg from Memrik
- Sunday services in the school
- Houses built of the sea-shell material available in the area
- Others living in the village Abram Janzen, Sara Janzen, Jakob Wiens
- 31. Kutschuk (Kultschuk) near Menlerchik
 - Mennonites moved, settling in other villages
 - By WWI no longer a Mennonite village
- 32. Kutievka (North) short distance east of Diurmen
 - Founded in the early 1870s, land purchased for 4 R per dess
 - Village was poor
- 33. Kutjuki
 - 10 km south of Jalatusch
 - 1 row of houses, had a school
 - Family Heinrich Vogt, wife Elisabeth (nee Enns) and seven children, all born in Kutjuki, were able to escape to Paraguay in 1930
 - Heinrich originally moved to Crimea in 1908, Wife Elisabeth was born in Kutjuki in 1886
- 34. Lustigstal (Central) rented village on estate of Anton D Lustig
 - Near Tashlider Station
 - Rented villages usually looked poor
 - Rent usually reckoned 1/3 or 3/10 of the yearly harvest
 - Kornelius Willms family, wife Eva (nee Wohlgemuth). Kornelius attempted to escape in 1929, but was arrested and sent into exile. Wife Eva and two sons were able to escape to Paraguay in 1931
- 35. Menlerchik (Central)
 - Part of the Spat real-estate deal
 - 7 km from Spat; 9 families settled here
 - Land extended across the Perekop-Simferopol highway and was good quality
 - Houses on both sides of the wide street
 - Buildings and fences constructed of limestone
 - School in the centre of the village; had a number of good teachers
 - Good source of water from a community well, stored in high water tower
 - Necessary business carried out in Spat
 - Family Johann Duerksen, wife Kaethe (nee Heinrichs) and four children, able to escape from Crimea to Paraguay in 1930. They had migrated to Crimea in 1919
 - Family Jakob Kornelsen to Moscow in 1929. Jakob, wife and some of his children exiled to the north, where he died in hospital. Oldest daughter Anna married a Jakob Duerksen and died in Paraguay
- 36. Morre (More)
 - Early 1890s; rented village on the land of Peter Heinrich Schroeder
 - Johann Dueck family, wife Katharina (nee Driediger) and ten children, escaped to Paraguay in 1930. Johann had come to Crimea in 1880

37. Muni (Mumij) (Wiebental) (North) close to, west of Tokultschak
 1 row of farms
 Cost 4R per dess
 Half of the land quite stony
 Entire village sold to German Lutherans
38. Novonikolsk
 Rented village on the estate of Peter Heinrich Schroeder
39. Ogus-Tobe (East)
 Founded 1884-1885, soon expanded by purchase of additional land
 Land holding of individual farms from 200-800 dess
 Very good black soil, but little rain
 Summer-fallowing used; crops winter wheat and barley
 Wealthy land owning village
 Wide straight street over 1 km long
 Large modern houses, built of stone from village owned quarry
 Each farm had orchard and vineyard
 Large school and teacherage in centre of village
 Early years affiliated with Gnadenfeld, then later with Karassan
 Did not have good water, wells had salty water; large cemented cisterns used
- XX. Pasha-Chokmak (Hochfeld) (Gross-Taschakmak)
 Abram Braun bought the land, and together with sons-in-law and sons established
 a 7 farm village
 Braun built and operated a steam mill
 Good school with good teacher
40. Sabantschi about 10 km from Menlerchik
41. Sari-Bash (Sary-Bash) (Ettingerbrunn)(North)
 Named after a government official
 Large village, houses on both sides of the street
 A large school
 Water problem; 80 m deep well did not provide enough water; supplementary well
 3 km away
 Ettingerbrunn Conference named after the village when the Crimean Mennonite Church
 split; the other was the Karassan Conference
 Whole village sold to the Lutherans in the 1890s, likely because of the water problem
42. Sari-Pasha-Chokmak (Hochfeld) (Central)
 Well-to-do farmers regarded as master farmers
 A Braun built a steam mill
43. Sarona (Ssarona) (Saroni) (East) estate/village
 1890 the widow of Abraham Matthies bought a large estate south of Dzhankoy-Kerch
 Railway
 Divided equally with 3 daughters and 2 sons
 Good soil, diligent people, co-operation
 Bred excellent pedigreed cattle, often imported from abroad

- Affiliated with the Gnadenfeld congregation
 1930 all Sarona residents exiled to Archangel in northern Russia, Caucasus, Kazakhstan
 Estate/village changed into a collective farm
44. Schoenthal (Ischung-Nemetzky) (Central)
 15 km from Kurman-Kemeltschi Station
 Headquarters of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Crimea
 Elder David Duerksen lived and worked here
 Large house of worship erected in 1905
 Family Gerhard Wohlgemuth, wife Lena (nee Penner) and one son able to escape
 from Crimea to Paraguay in 1930
45. Schonuk (Schnuk) near Menlerchik
 Mennonites moved, settling in other villages
 By WWI no longer a Mennonite village
46. Sergejewka 10 km from Menlerchik
47. Schirin (East) the railway branch line from Dzhankoy
 On the shore of the Sea of Azov
 Said to be a lovely village
48. Spat (Central) largest Mennonite village
 1881 a group of Molotschna Mennonites bought 5,000 dess from an estate owners wife,
 Anna Semionova
 Near Sarabus Station on the newly built Southern Railway
 Cost 40R per dess; good water
 2 villages founded, Spat and Menlerchik
 31 farms formed Spat, settlers from 17 villages mainly Halbstadt area
 Leaders Johann Langemann and Kornelius Wall
 Some difficulty paying off the debt, finally settled by 1912
 Most houses large and solid, mostly limestone, Molotschna pattern
 Good shrubs and orchards, large shade trees, rich agricultural village
 2 elementary schools; in 1883 a school and teacherage built, larger school with 2
 classrooms in 1884
 Also a school for the poor (*Armenschule*)
 With workers' families needed additional school
Zentralschule founded in 1906; widespread cooperation to build;
 accepted girls, a first for Mennonite secondary schools
 Good school with excellent teachers
 Largest Mennonite industrial and business centre in Crimea, with Sarabus Station
 and Simferopol near by
 Large agricultural machinery factory of Johann Langemann; 2 large steam mills owned by
 Langemann and Unrau; binder twine factory; Dutch windmill built by F Wiens;
 store and iron and lumber business
 Affiliate of the Rueckenau MB Church met in Spat
 1897 Elder David Duerksen came from Molotschna, congregation built in Schoenthal
 Mill owner Peter Unrau

- Salgir River banks often picnic site, in spring a waterfall
49. Sultan Bazar
Rented village on the estate of Peter Heinrich Schroeder
50. Temir-Bulat (Philipptal) (North)
Named after Philpp Wiebe, son-in-law of Johann Cornies
Land bought for 3 R per dess; remained poor because it was stony and infertile
Became the centre of the *Brotbrechergemeinde* of Hermann Peters
Separated from the MB church, feeling it necessary to break the bread the way Jesus did, not cut the bread
At the turn of the century (1900) the entire congregation moved to Siberia under the leadership of Hermann Peters, some went to the US in the 1890s
The village was home of the elder Heinrich B Unruh, father of Benjamin and Abraham, Elder of the Karassan Mennonite Church. He died in 1883
51. Toksaba northwest of Menlerchik, about 10 km
52. Tokultschak (Johannesfeld) (Johannesruh?) (North)
Named after Johann Cornies
12 farms, paid 7R per dess; each 30 by 80 fathoms; land fertile
8 yards on one side, 4 on the other
Also houses for village smith, windmill owner and shepherd
Well 48 m deep, good water for man and animals
Had a school; good teachers
A number of Thiessen families to US in the 1870s
First years difficult, especially 1887
1890s a new school; Heinrich S Ediger teacher also choir director
53. Topalovka (Central) 10 km west of Spat in Yevpatoria district
Turn of century well-to-do Philipp Warkentin from Karassan with sons and sons-in-law bought 902 dess from estate owner Topalov
11 farmyards of 82 dess each were established
Father moved into the estate house while children built their farmyards
Soil was good, and the village did well
54. Tschongraw (Chongrav) (Tchongrav) (Central)
Founded 1890s by Mennonites from Blumenfeld
Bible School begun 1918 by Johann G Wiens at request of MB Missions Committee
Heinrich Braun second teacher; Abraham Unruh joined in 1920
Curriculum many faceted; Three year program; men and women accepted
All teachers and students arrested but released in 1920
Local authorities closed the school March 1924; had 50 students when it closed
Family Gerhard Isaak, wife Aganetha Huebert, with two daughters, escaped from Crimea to Paraguay in 1930. Husband of daughter, Hans Wiens, actually died on the way, in Moscow.
Entire village ordered evacuated, leaving by a wagon train, on 16 August 1941
To Bijuk Station, then train to Zaporozhye, then on foot to the Molotschna
Eventually many on the Great Trek, some arriving in Canada after WWII

55. Tukulchak (Johannesruh) (North)

1km from the highway

Land bought in the 1860s for 7 R per dess

12 farmyards, 30 by 80 fathoms, 100 dess, on both sides of the street

Had gardens and especially fine trees

Large village well, 48 m deep, provided good water for man and animals

At first school in a private home, built a small school, then had a fine roomy building

Teachers Peter Unruh, Kornelius Warkentin, H S Ediger

Large stone quarry nearby

Family Heinrich Esau, wife Elisabeth (nee Janzen) and three children able to escape from
Crimea to Paraguay in 1930

Sources:

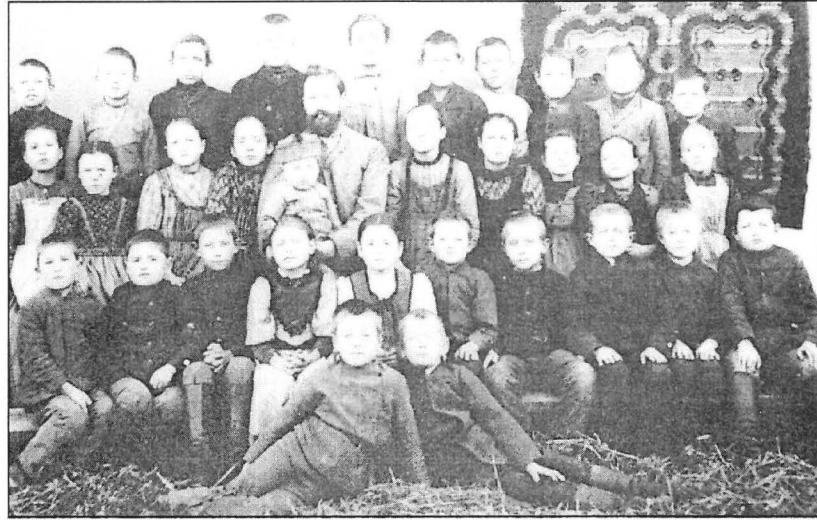
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The Mennonite villages of Baragon and Topalovka



Public school in Baragon, Peter Klassen teacher, 1892

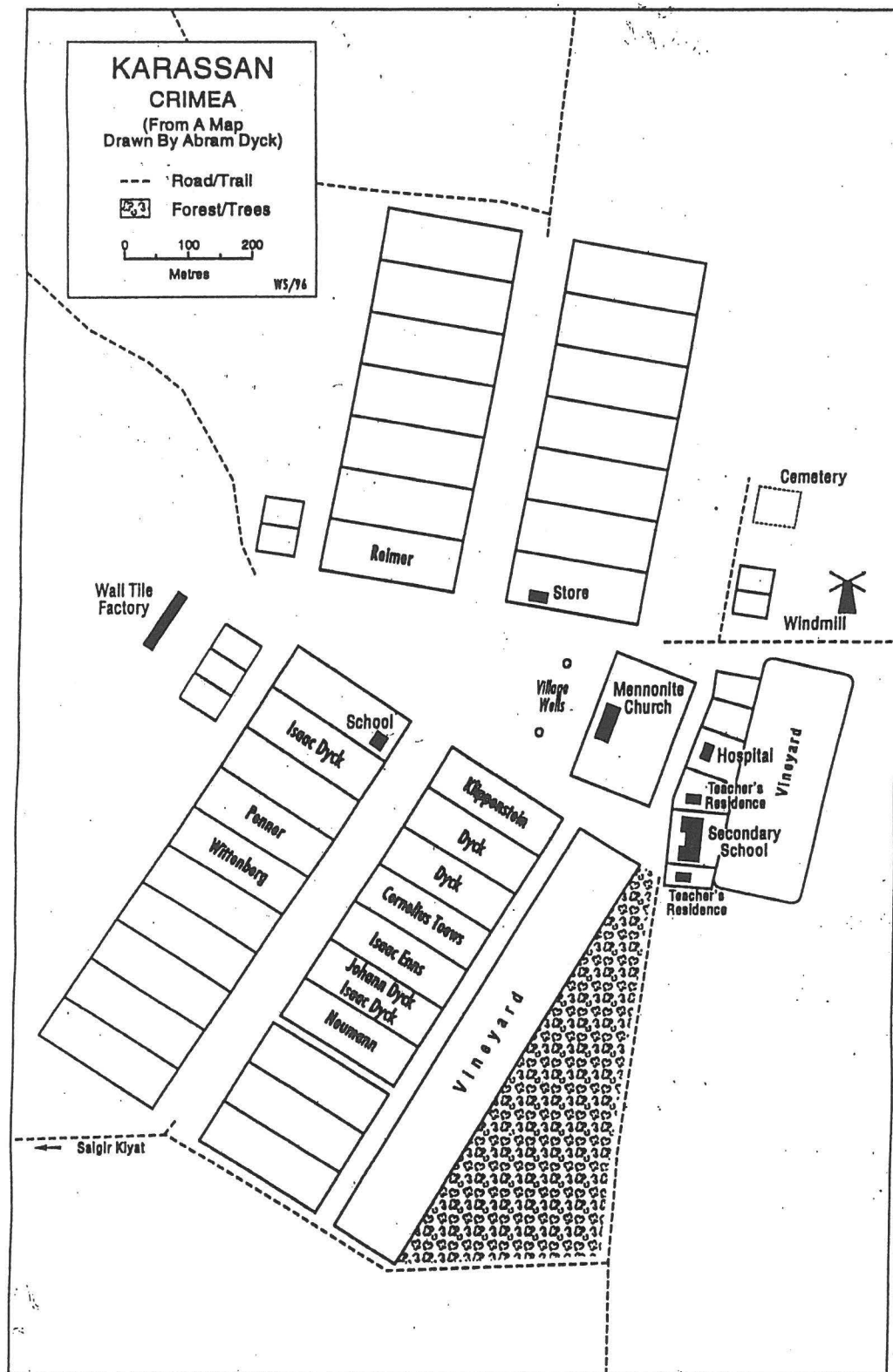


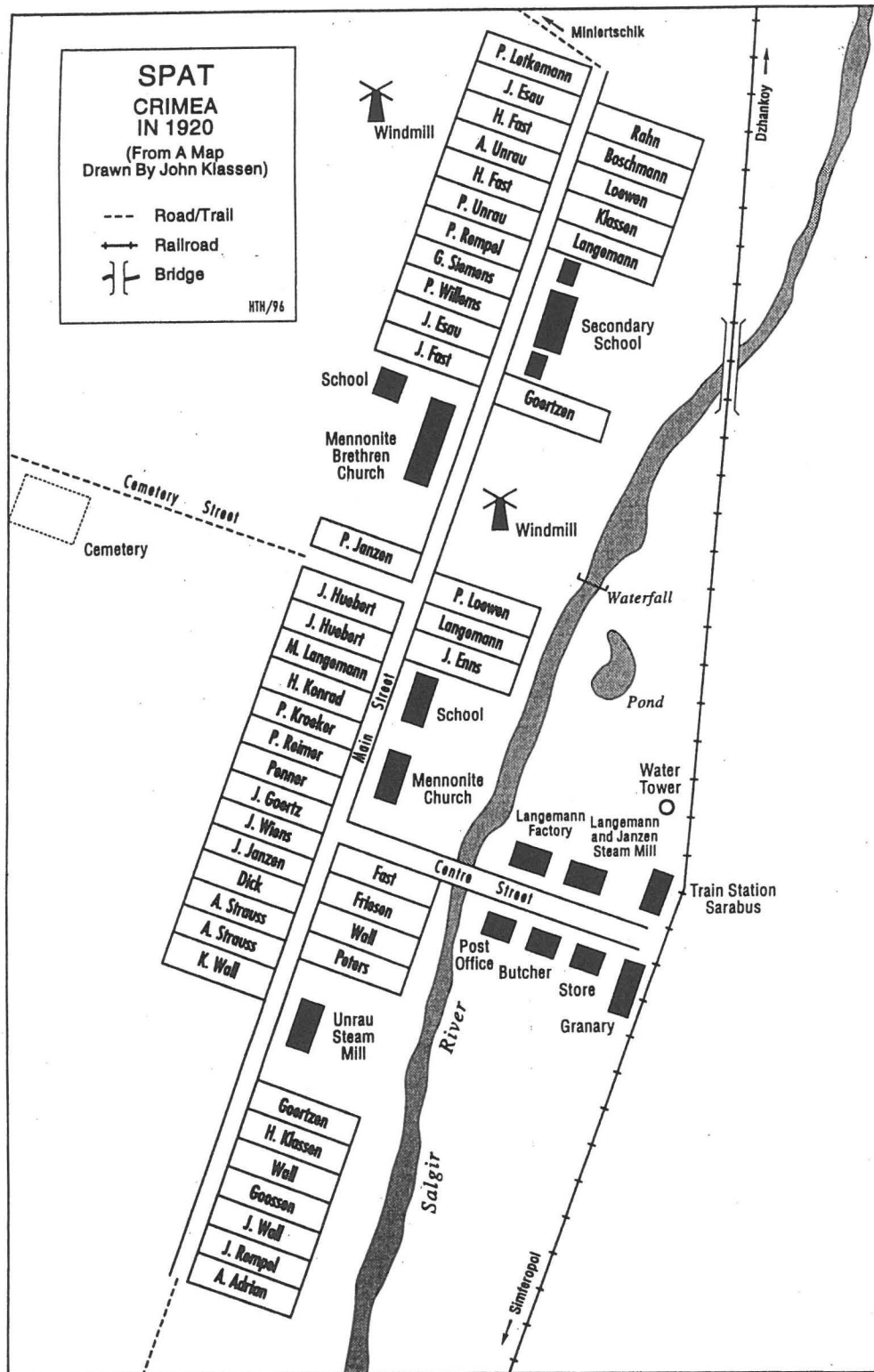
Brass band in Baragon, near Karassan

Topalovka



A communal butchering day at Topalovka

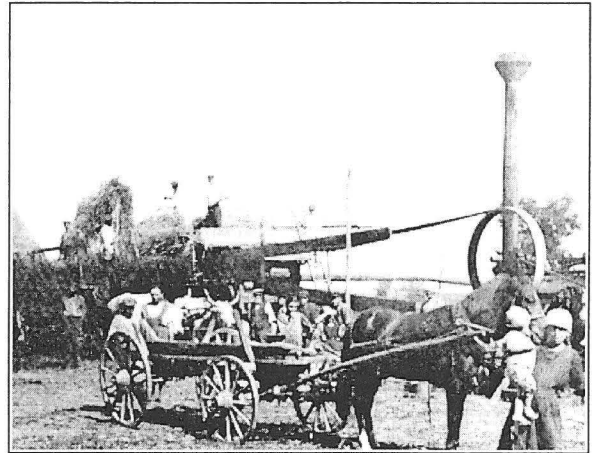




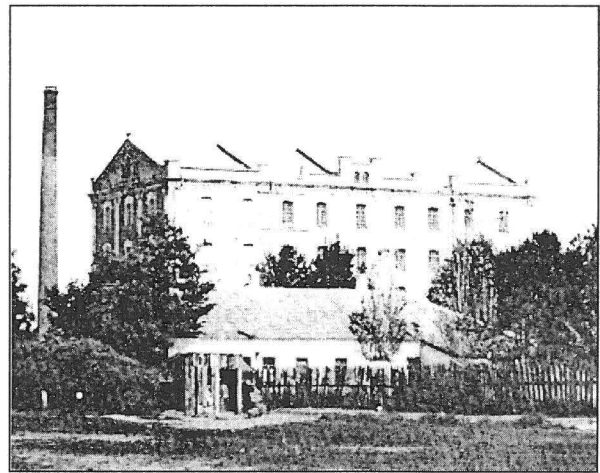
The Mennonite village of Spat



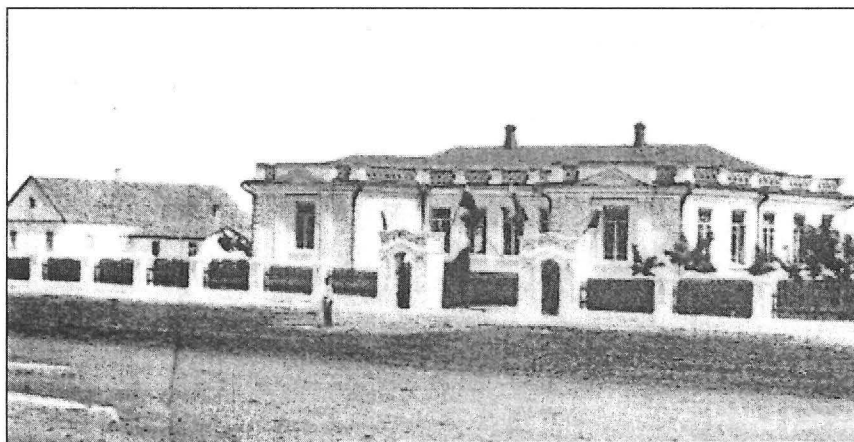
Windmill in Spat



Harvest in Spat

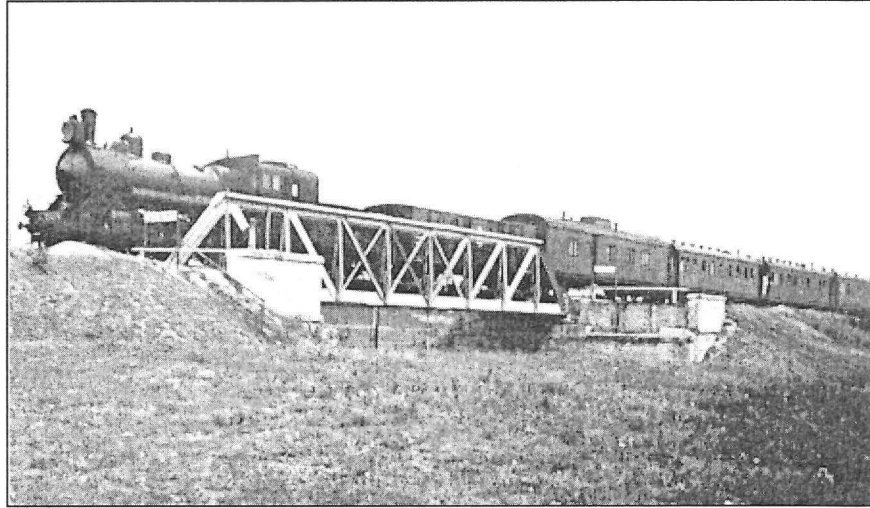


Martin Langemann's mill in Spat



Zentralschule in Spat

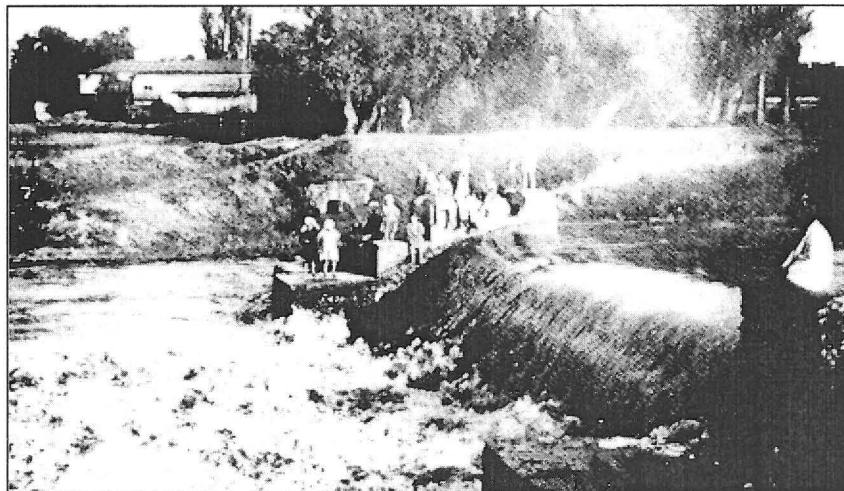
The Mennonite village of Spat



Train on bridge over the Salgir River near Spat

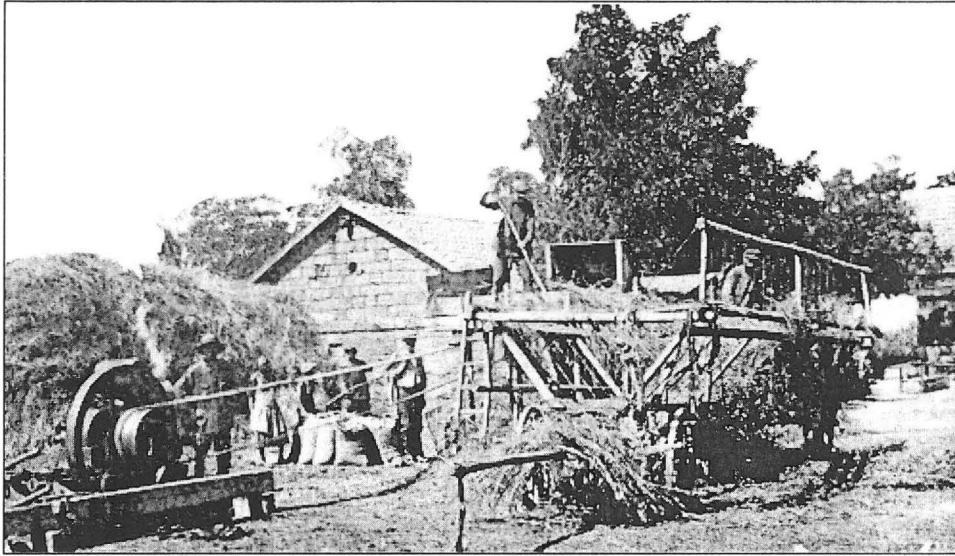


Station Sarabus near Spat

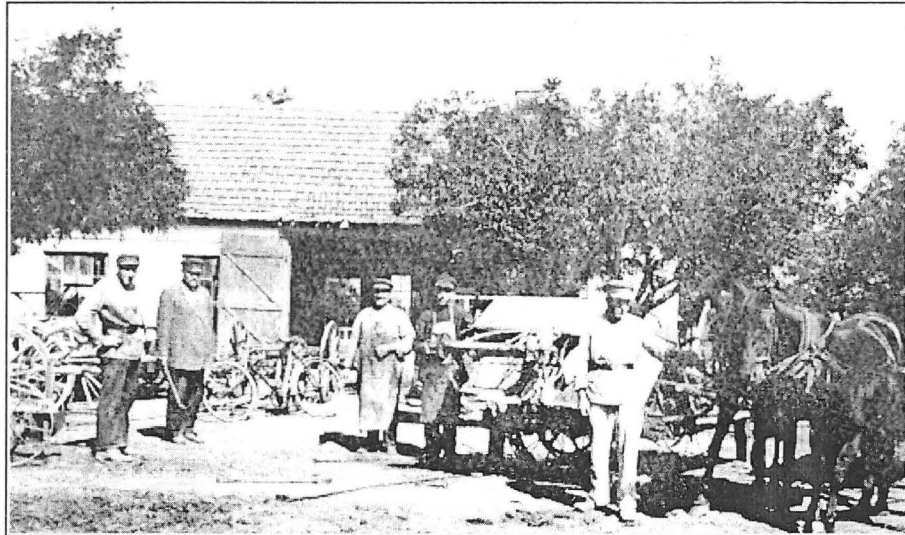


Salgir River flooding in Spat

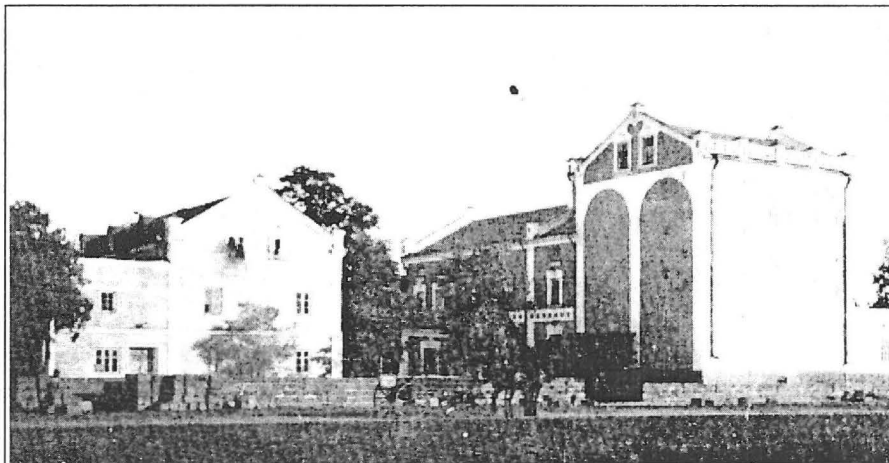
The Mennonite village of Spat



The yard and harvest operation of Abram Boschmann

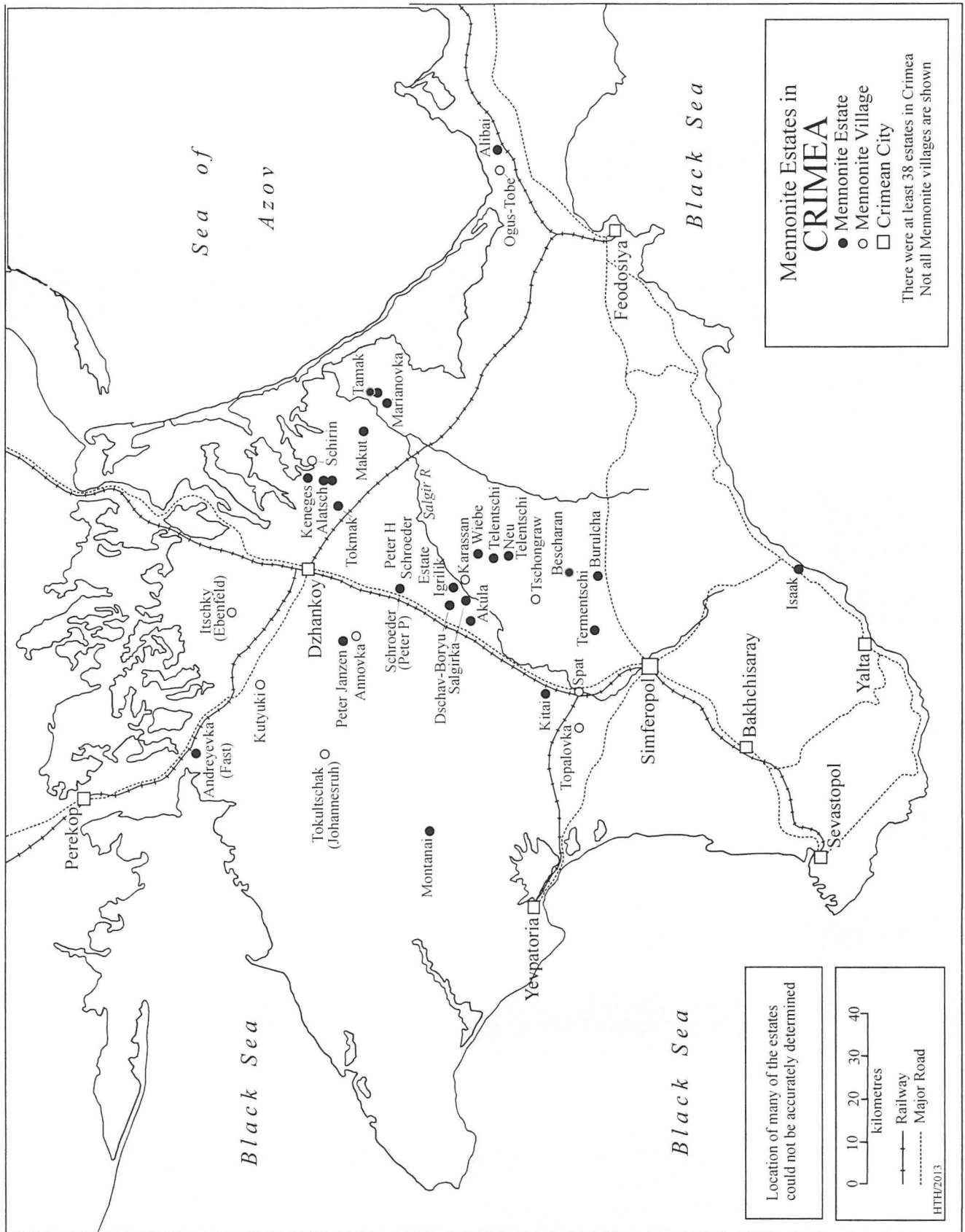


The black-smith shop of Abram Boschmann



The mill of Peter D Unrau in Spat

MENNONITE
ESTATES
IN
CRIMEA



MENNONITE ESTATES

We have listed 38 estates owned by Mennonites. They varied in size, Andreyevka, for example being only 510 dess; the estate of Peter H Schroeder on the other hand was more than 10,000 dess.

Not all of the estates existed at the same time. For example, a number ceased to exist when they were divided into component parts, each component part then was classified as an estate on its own.

Generally, Mennonites started owning estates in Crimea in the early or mid 1860s, and had as a whole abandoned them by the mid 1920s.

Sometimes it was difficult to define what the property was - a small village or a large multi-owner estate? Examples would be Itschky (Ebenfeld), Saron and Topalovka which we have classified as villages.

Some of the estates had villages on their territory, for example Baschlitscha and More on the estate of Peter Schroeder.

With the onset of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War, it became increasingly more dangerous to own estates, particularly to live on them. A number of estate owners were murdered on their estates.

It is difficult to be sure of the exact location of a fair number of the estates. Similar to the villages, they tended to be near roads or railways. Some, by the nature of their principal "product" needed to be able to transport this product to the market.

1. Akula (Akulla)

Owned by Philipp Jakob Wiebe

Philipp Wiebe and his son were murdered on either Akula or Dzhangrav in 1920

2. Alatsch (Alach)

Owned by Johann Peter Cornies, son of Peter Heinrich Cornies, who was nephew of Johann Cornies

NE Crimea, near Schirin

Originally rented 300 dess, inherited another 500 dess, eventually totaled 4,000 dess

Estate buildings in large quadrangle; had manor house, houses for workers, machine shed, horse barn, blacksmith shop

Artesian well

Many animals: cows, chickens, pigs, sheep, horses, oxen

School started on estate 1913

Spring 1923 family left estate and moved to Ohrloff, Molotschna

Apparently all buildings demolished in the early 1940s, land became part of a large cooperative farm

3. Alatsch (Alach)

Owned by Peter Heinrich Cornies, son of Johann Peter Cornies

NE Crimea, near Schirin

Peter had wife Maria Martens and 6 children
 1,200 dess, then probably up to 4,000 dess
 Livestock: sheep, cows, oxen, horses, pigs, chickens, ducks
 Crops: wheat, oats, barley, hay
 Large ornamental garden, homes for farm help, granary, blacksmith shop, barns,
 machine shed, artesian well, hot water pipes
 Had artesian well and aqueduct
 Treated workers well
 Johann Fast was the manager in 1903
 Had to leave 1923. 1944 Tatars were expelled and all buildings leveled

4. Alibai (Ali-Bai)

3-4 v east of village of Ogus-Tobe
 Estate had 2 owners, 1 Mennonite, 1 Lutheran
 Probably established 1882 or 1883

5. Andreyevka

Owned by Peter A Fast, who bought it in 1900; he previously lived in Fernheim
 Northern Crimea, near railway, 25 v from Perekop, 3 v from telegraph line
 30 v north of Tokultschak, Voinski Volost
 Bought 510 dess for 130R per dess; nice buildings worth 8,000R

6. Baesler

Owned by brothers Baesler
 Conflict involving workers in 1906, one worker killed, 6 injured
 Estate owner Heinrich Baesler shot (probably killed) late 1917 or early 1918

7. Bay-on-lar

Owned by Kornelius Epp
 Manor house built 1912
 At least 5 children, 4 of them being Nicholas, Kornelius, Johann, Dimitri
 Driven off their land spring of 1922, a Tatar village taking over the area

8. Bescharan

Estate with upper, mid and lower sections
 25 km south of Karassan, 10 km SE of Tschongraw
 In 1909 Jakob Janzen and Johann Toews bought the mid portion, 960 dess
 1910 Peter Dick and 3 renters also joined
 1915, when German landowners were to be dispossessed, Peter Dick and the renters left
 Abram Neufeld family moved in
 Occupied during the Civil War by a number of families and men

9. Burulcha (Burultscha)

20 v E of Simferopol, on Burulcha River
 Total size 4,000 dess
 Owned by David Jakob Dick of Apanlee
 Part of it was an orchard of 60 dess, in good years giving income of 60,000R
 Enough employees to require a teacher for their children

10. Buruntcha

- Probably owned by Johann J Cornies
 A distance from Mennonite centres
 12,000 dess
11. Dschav-Boryu
 5 v NW of Karassan
 Owned by Jakob Gerhard Martens and wife Albertine Schroeder, on estate
 of Peter Heinrich Schroeder
 1,531 dess inherited from Albertin's father, Peter Heinrich Schroeder, when he died
 in 1896
 Built estate house, granaries, barns, carriage house, gardens, planted forest
 Developed "Martens Golden Wheat"
 Driven from estate in the early 1920s
12. Dzhangrav
 Owned by Philipp Jakob Wiebe
13. Hoffnungsberg
 Probably established 1860
 Owners and exact location not known
14. Igrilik
 3v NW of Karassan
 Owned by Johann Schroeder; wife Margaretha Janzen
 Inherited 2 pieces of land, 1,013 dess and 151 dess (total 1,164) from father Peter
 Heinrich Schroeder, who died in 1896
 New building designed and erected for family, with all newest conveniences
 Johann died November 1913, infected appendix ruptured before doctor was able
 to operate
15. Isaak
 Southern coast of Crimea, NE of Yalta
 Owned by Peter Isaak
 Sold some of his land to the Molotschna Teachers Association for 1,500R, probably
 in 1913
 Land just above the "professor's nook" south coast of Crimea at Alushta, foot of
 Kastell Mountain
 Teachers built a retreat centre on the property
16. Janzen, Jakob
 Owned by Jakob Janzen
 Specific location not known
 Wife was Helena Martens, daughter of Wilhelm Johann Martens
 Land probably inherited from or given to Janzen by his father-in-law Martens
17. Janzen, Peter
 Central Crimea, near Dzhankoy
 Owned by Peter P Janzen
 Annovka (Annenfeld) founded by Kleine Gemeinde members in the late 1860s
 Then established the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church in 1869

- Entire congregation emigrated to North America in the mid-1870s
 Peter Janzen bought the land and rented it to poorer members of the MB church
 at low rates
 Soil good; settlement flourished
 Janzen in time sold his holdings, moved south to Estate Kitai
 Presumably the estate disappeared at that time
18. Keneges
 NE Crimea, 20 v from Dzhankoy, a few v west of village Schirin
 1,562 dess
 Owned by Dietrich Dietrich Esau, wife Agnes Martens
 Probably land inherited from Johann Wilhelm Martens
 Large herds purebred cattle; cereal grains grown on massive scale
19. Kitai (Kitay)
 Central Crimea, a few v from main NS railway, a few v north of Spat
 Owned by Peter P Janzen, who moved there, having sold his estate further north
 in the Crimea
 960 dess
 Yard in 2 sections; *Gasthof*, estate house and yard; *Arbeitshof*, work area and farm yard
 Some of the land rented out to Russian tenants, who lived in a village east of *Gasthof*
 Robbed 15 July 1918, son Dietrich shot; father Peter wounded; 19,000R taken
20. Klassen, Abraham
 At Dzhav-Boryu, 10 v from Station Kurman-Kemeltshi
 Owned or rented by Abraham Klassen
 240 dess
 70 dess seeded with wheat
 Advertized for sale, available September 1910
21. Makut (Makum)
 NE Crimea, near railway, SW of village Schirin
 Owned by Jakob Toews, long manager of the Tamak Estate
 Purchased about 1917
 Large; herds of purebred cattle, cereal grains grown on massive scale
22. Marianovka (Dick)
 Eastern Crimea, N of railway, near Sea of Azov
 E of Dzhankoy, NW of Feodosiya
 Originally part of the Tamak (Schmidt) Estate
 Owned by Peter Jakob Dick, brother of David Jakob Dick of Apanlee, originally bought by
 Mrs Peter Schmidt II in 1875
 1894 divided into 3 sections, 1 portion for each of her 3 daughters or their husbands
 This part owned by Peter and Anna Dick
 Size at one point 726 dess, although likely often much larger
 Orchards, fruit growing business
 In autumn Tatars hired to pick, sort, pack the fruit, and ship to nearest railway station
 Attempted robbery 1906, 2 watchmen killed

- Peter died 18 April 1920, estate abandoned 1921
 Thereafter part of collective farm; many of the buildings still stand (2004)
23. Montanai
 30 km N of Eupatoria, 70 km NW of Simferopol
 Established 1885 by 5 brothers, Heinrich, Wilhelm, Peter, Jakob, Johann Martins
 who came from Sarabasch, Crimea
 Initially purchased 2,740 dess from government for about 19,000R
 First 7 years lived together until paid for, then moved onto separate farmyards
 Good land, good crops of grain and fruit
 Had school, flour mill, deep well
 Members of Busav (Ettingerbrunn) Mennonite church
 1910 purchased additional 1,200 dess
 Anna, daughter of Wilhelm, graduated from medicine in Simferopol 1923 or 1924,
 to Canada in 1926
 1921 taken over by Bolsheviks
 Some original buildings still exist, part of the village Novoselivs'ke
 2007 Willie Martins, great-grandson of Heinrich Martins, has a farm in the region
24. Neu Telentschi (Tellentschi)
 South of Karassan, just S of Telentschi Estate
 Estate consisted of 3 farms
 Jakob Dyck, wife Sara (nee Reimer) 7 sons, 6 daughters
 Johann, doctor serving in White Army, died of typhoid
 Jakob, tent evangelist
 Katharina, married Alexander Ediger
 621 dess
 Offered for sale November 1910
 Jakob Reimer, 5 children
 Jakob Goossen, wife Anna (nee Reimer) 8 children
 Peter Klassen of Spat was teacher on the estate for some time
25. Penner, Anna
 About 8 v NNE of Karassan
 Owner Anna Penner (nee Schroeder)
 Inherited 827 dess from her father Peter Heinrich Schroeder, who died in 1896
 Also inherited land from her father in the Taschtschenak region
 Separated from her husband Wilhelm Penner
 Sold much of her inherited land and travelled extensively
 Died in Berlin 1945
26. Salgirka (Salgir-Kiat)
 Near Akula Estate and Karassan
 Owned by Kornelius Wall
27. Schroeder, Heinrich
 About 10v NNE of Karassan
 Owned by Heinrich Peter Schroeder

- 298 dess inherited from his father Peter Heinrich Schroeder in 1896, with final disposition in 1901
 Also inherited some land from his father in the Taschtschenak region
 Fled from his estate during the Revolution
 Died in Melitopol 5 December 1926
28. Schroeder, Margarethe P
 Immediately N of Karassan
 Owned by Margarethe Schroeder (married David Goossen 27 February 1921)
 Inherited 2 pieces of land, 1,431 and 100 dess (total 1,531) from her father Peter Heinrich Schroeder, who died in 1896
 Brother Peter and her mother lived with her in Novonikolsk
 Probably sold estate before the Communists confiscated everything
 Peter continued to live with them until he died in 1942
 Margarethe and David to Paraguay, where they both died
29. Schroeder, Peter H
 Central Crimea, mostly N of Karassan
 Owned by Peter Heinrich Schroeder (1838-1896)
 Purchased large tracts of land, starting in 1867, last purchase 1891
 Did not cultivate the land himself; leased out the land to Russians and Mennonites; there were at least 7 villages on his land
 The villages were More, Baschlitscha, Dschav-Boryu, Bek Bulatschi, Sultan Bazar, Dschyaga Baschi and Novonikolsk
 He died 1896, at the time owning 10,614 dess, valued at 1,046,200R
 His will gave smaller portions of land to the children of his first marriage, about 1,500 dess to each of the 6 children of his second marriage
30. Schroeder, Peter P
 Central Crimea, NNW of Karassan, near Station Kurman Kimiltschi
 Owned by Peter Peter Schroeder, son of Peter H Schroeder
 Inherited 2 pieces of land from his father, totaling 1,483 dess
 Mennonite village Baschlitscha on his property, as well as More
 No appropriate manor house on his property, so he lived with his sister Margarethe at Novonikolsk
 Elected to Duma in 1914, traveled a lot
 Sold property about 1918, converting assets to gold or jewelry
 Peter died in Chortitza 6 June 1942
31. Schroeder, Wilhelm P
 Immediately NE of Karassan
 Owned by Wilhelm Peter Schroeder
 Inherited 2 pieces of land, 1,167 dess and 287 dess (total 1,454 dess) from his father Peter Heinrich Schroeder, who died in 1896
 Never actually lived on the estate; he probably managed it from Sevastopol, where he and the family lived
 Said to have sold the estate to a Mr Neufeld

He was a career officer in Czar's forces
Murdered by Bolsheviks

32. Tamak (Dick)

Eastern Crimea, N of railway, near Sea of Azov
Owned by David Jakob Dick of Apanlee, originally bought by Mrs Peter Schmidt II
in 1875
1894 divided into 3 sections, 1 portion for each of her 3 daughters or their husbands
One portion received by David Dick and wife Katharina (nee Schmidt)
7,000 dess; park, forest, orchards, hay fields, cultivated land, pasture
200-300 workers, paid 1R per day
Simmental cattle, milk cows, oxen, sheep, horses
Winter wheat, barley, oats
School with teacher
Dick family lived in Apanlee; autumn 1918 some fled to Tamak
Some employees and Dick family executed by Reds 1 April 1919

33. Tamak (Schmidt)

Eastern Crimea, N of railway, near Sea of Azov
Bought by Mrs Peter Schmidt II (Marie Wilhelm Schmidt) in 1875
She bought it from Nikolai Shatylov for 3R per dess
Grist mill, brick and roof tile factory
Livestock and field crops
1894 divided into 3 sections, 1 portion for each of her 3 daughters or their husbands
With the division into 3 sections the original estate disappeared

34. Telentschi

South of Karassan
Franz Dick family and Johann Tjart and family lived on the estate
School; Gerhard Abraham Klassen teacher 1906-1909
Modern; running water and water heating

35. Termentschi (Termenchi)

NE of Simferopol
Owned by Elisabeth Abraham Thiessen
360 dess

36. Thiessen, Johann

About 10v directly N of Karassan
Owned by Johann and Marie (nee Schroeder) Thiessen, and when she died inheritance
went to their 2 sons, Johann and Konstantin
Inherited 1,700 dess from Marie's father Peter Heinrich Schroeder when he died in 1896
Konstantin died as teenager
In time sole owner was Johann Thiessen

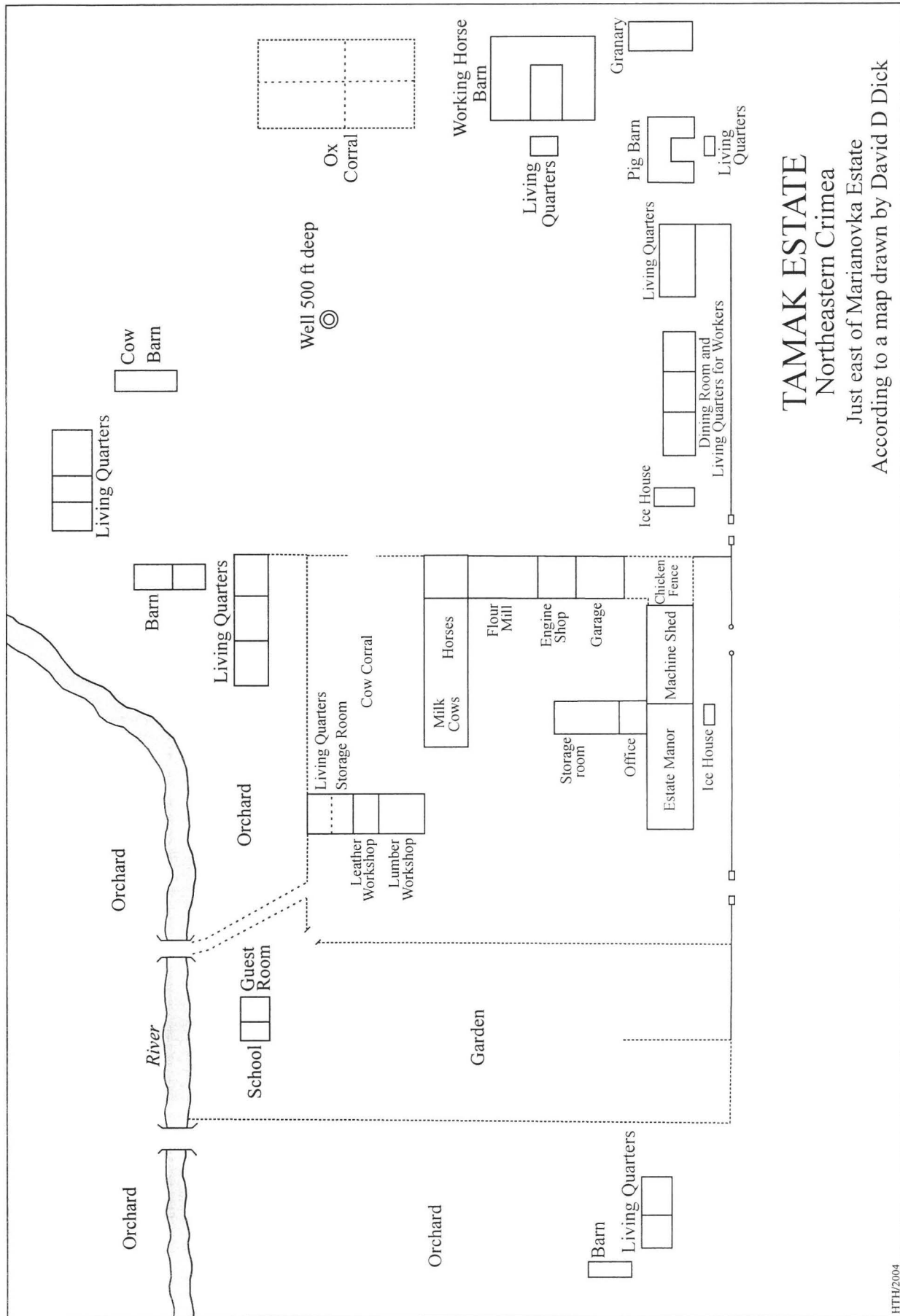
37. Tokmak

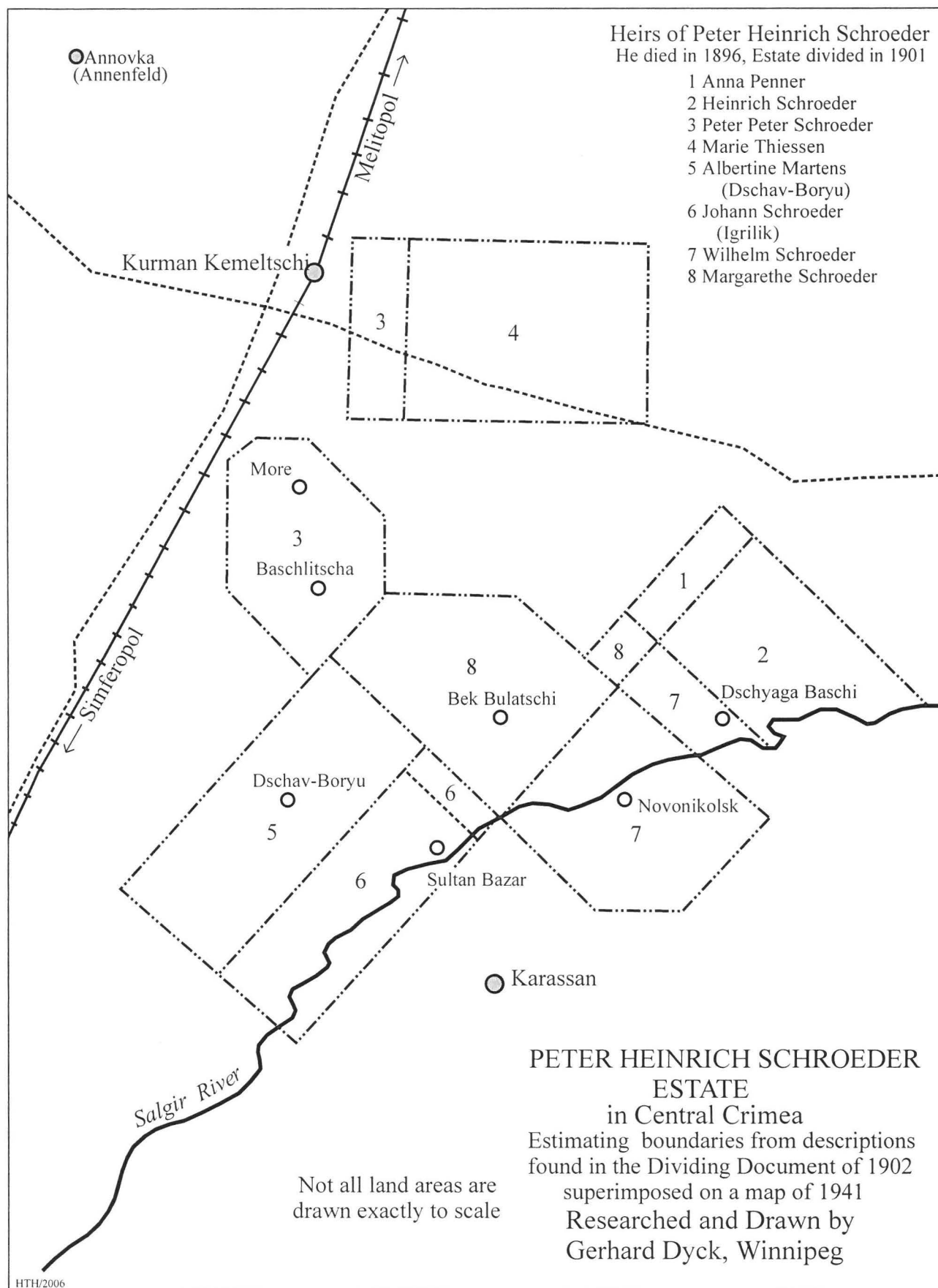
Eastern Crimea, near railway, SE of Mennonite village Schirin
Owned by J Cornies, descendent of Johann Cornies
Large

- Herds of pure-bred cattle, cereal grains on massive scale
38. Wiebe (Philipp) Crimea
Estate owner Philipp Jakob Wiebe and three other families
Established village of Dzchaya-Shekh-Eli in 1888
In the years before WWI the other 3 families bought out Wiebe
Wiebe and his sons murdered on the estate by bandits (possibly 1918)

Sources:

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- Goerz, H, Mennonite Settlements in Crimea, Echo Historical Series (translated into English)
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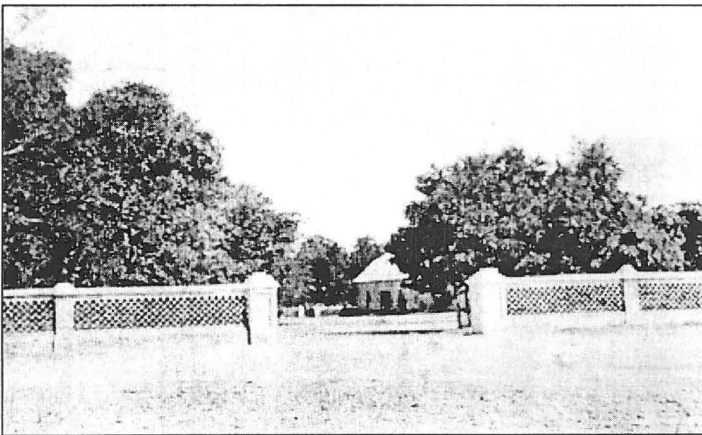




Tamak Estate



Jakob Dicks and their guests in front of the manor house at Tamak Estate



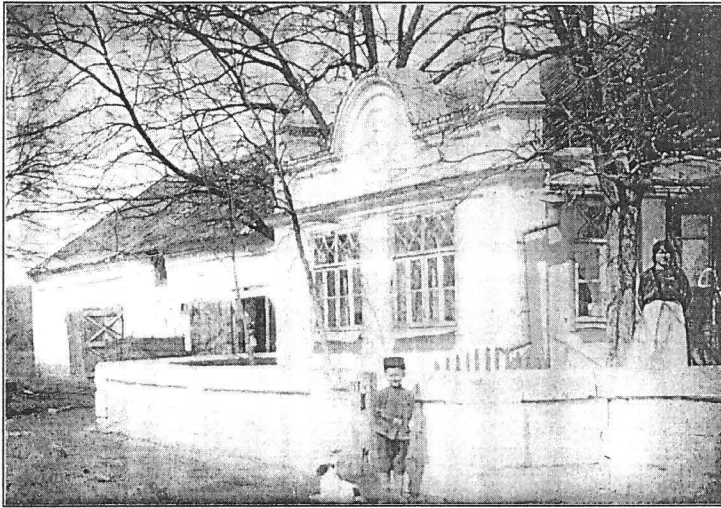
Entrance Gate at Tamak Estate

Bay-on-lar Estate



Manor building constructed in 1912 by
Kornelius Epp

Montanai Estate



Manor house of Heinrich and Anna Martins



Dr Anna Martins
daughter of Wilhelm Martins



Funeral of Heinrich W Martins, November 1905

RETREAT CENTRE CRIMEA SOUTHERN COAST

For several years there had been discussion regarding a possible retreat centre in Crimea at the teachers' conferences in Halbstadt. Particularly interested in the project were two teachers, B B Wiens and C Wiens.

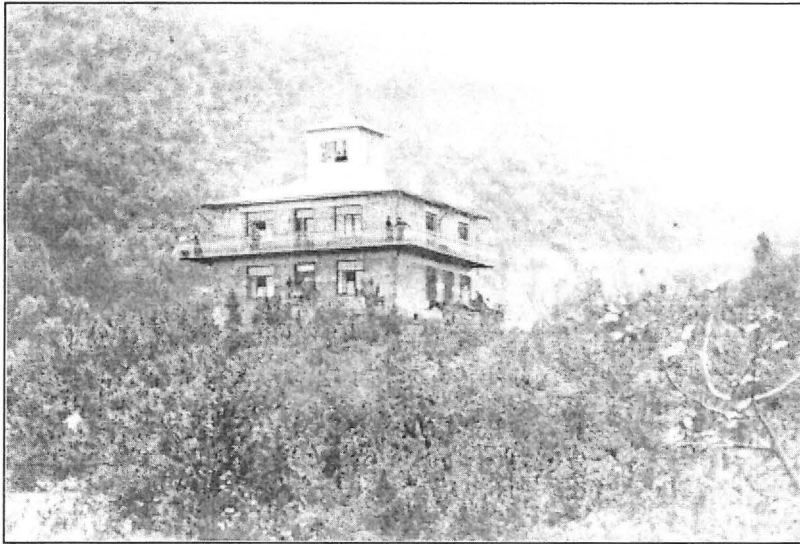
In 1912 the two Wiens teachers spent their vacation time on the south coast of Crimea. They had actually been commissioned by a group of teachers to find a suitable site for a retreat centre. In their research they visited various health spas such as Gursuf, Yalta and Alupka. A Tatar agent showed them a number of properties, including in the region of Alushta. One day they explored a beautiful location situated rather high in the mountains, which had a beautiful view of the coast and of course of the Black Sea. They had found what they were looking for! They returned home to Halbstadt and started to collect money. When they had 1500 R, enough to purchase the property, they returned to Alushta to pay Peter Isaak, who owned some of the land. It was a very lovely site just above the "professors' nook" at the foot of Kastell Mountain.

Next the retreat centre needed to be built. Abram Klassen, a wealthy religion teacher from Halbstadt was willing to lend some money to help pay for the construction. A Mr Ediger, who owned a neighbouring dacha, was willing to help. Teacher B B Wiens delayed the construction of his own house in Halbstadt to oversee the building of the retreat.

Finally the house with four rooms and veranda was completed. From the veranda there was a wonderful view of the surrounding mountains and coastline, not to mention the elaborate villas of the rich and famous. The first guests in the retreat were the families of Wiens and Klassen, who spent several weeks basking in the warm sun.

The initial structure was quite modest; it was hoped that in time project would generate enough interest to enlarge the facility. There was even some support from Crimean interests. The village of Ogus-Tobe contributed to enable the planting of suitable trees and grass. Even the Chortitza Teachers' Federation showed some interest!

Unfortunately the outbreak of World War I brought the wonderful plans for future use and expansion of the centre to an end. Since the property was "german" it was subject to the anti-german liquidation laws passed by the government, so it could not be used. Eventually the building deteriorated, and in time burned to the ground.



Retreat Centre

CHURCHES IN CRIMEA

CHURCHES IN CRIMEA

It is interesting that while pictures of factories, mills, schools and other buildings have been found, no picture of a church has been discovered. Undoubtedly the Crimean Mennonites were people of faith, so this lack does not necessarily reflect a lack of interest, but it is peculiar!

This is the list of Mennonite churches which functioned in Crimea:

KARASSAN MENNONITE CHURCH

The Karassan Mennonite Church congregation was organized soon after the settlements began in Crimea. It was founded in 1862 by Mennonites from the Molotschna Colony.

The first elder was Jakob Wiebe (1862-1880). With his death Heinrich B Unruh was elected elder. He, in turn, died in 1883. Then Friedrich Raabe was elected. At the beginning of his term of office the congregation separated into two, the new portion founding the Ettingerbrunn Mennonite Church. Raabe actually joined the new congregation

Abraham Friesen became the elder of the remaining congregation, and served them well. When he withdrew because of old age Hermann Rempel was elected elder. When Rempel withdrew in 1921 Peter Letkemann served as elder until the congregation was dissolved by the Bolshevik government.

Some of the ministers of the congregation were: August Strauss, Johann Tjart, Hermann Rempel, Kornelius Janzen.

In 1905 there were 846 members with a total population of 1,928 people; later this increased "considerably." They had a large church building in Karassan. There were three affiliates: Spat after 1882; Diurmen after 1884; Pasha-Chokmak after 1890

ETTINGERBRUNN (BUSAV-AKTACHI) MENNONITE CHURCH

Separated from the Karassan Mennonite Church in 1884. The first elder was Friedrich Raabe, who came from the Karassan church. There were three ministerial elections 1890-1895. Abraham Friesen of the Karassan congregation continued to serve the new branch as well. In 1901 H Martens was elected elder by a large majority. The old name was dropped; it was then called Busav or the Busav-Aktachi congregation.

Martens was well liked, but unfortunately died of dysentery on November 11, 1905. Minister P Friedrichsen was elected elder, and served faithfully for 20 years. He died July 26, 1926.

In the 1920s the Bolshevik authorities ordered the Busav congregation to be divided into districts. The church never did have its own building, but held services in various schools.

MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH

The Mennonite Brethren started functioning in Crimea in the mid 1880s, through the work of itinerant ministers based in the Rueckenau M B Church. An affiliate of the Rueckenau church was organized, with headquarters in Spat. The first baptism in Crimea was in the spring of 1885; 21 people were baptized by Elder David Schellenberg in the Salgir River.

Hermann Konrad was elected elder of the group in September of 1886. Construction of a building was begun in 1887. Additional ministers were dedicated in 1890, 1894, 1895 and 1897. Heinrich Unruh was ordained in 1897.

Also in 1897 David Duerksen was called to the ministry. He was ordained as elder in 1899. The congregation then became independent. David Duerksen served with distinction until he died 13 years later, in 1912.

The congregation built a beautiful new building in Schoental in 1910, with a seating capacity of over 600. In 1910 the congregation consisted of 140 families, 330 members, totaling 880 persons, with later a substantial increase in numbers.

The church did not actually have affiliates, but there were separate independent groups in Spat, Annovka, Baschlitscha and Tukulchak.

During World War I preaching in German was prohibited, the building in Schoental being converted into a field hospital. After the end of the war the congregation again used the building as a church, likely until the Bolsheviks prohibited all religious functions in the mid 1920s.

EVANGELICAL (MENNONITE) BRETHREN

In 1921 a new congregation emerged. The founder was Hermann Rempel, originally from Gnadenfeld, Molotschna. When Rempel was elected elder of the Karassan congregation, he and several other ministers worked for spiritual awakening. There was some reaction against the methods used. This reaction induced Rempel and several other ministers to found a new congregation. The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church.

In one year there were 137 members and seven ministers. The congregation grew steadily. However, with the onset of religious persecution by the Bolshevik authorities all religious life came to a standstill. Elder Rempel himself was arrested and exiled.

KRIMMER MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH

The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church was founded in Annenfeld, Crimea, on 21 September, 1869. Through a spontaneous revival most of the families of the village began to seek a more earnest Christian life, and to experience conversion. It was a group of 19 persons, including Jakob A Wiebe (1836-1931). Wiebe asked a *Kleine Gemeinde* leader, Johann Friesen, to organize them into a congregation, which he did in 1867. Wiebe was ordained as minister, and soon thereafter as elder. The group asked one of its own members, Kornelius Enns, to baptize Elder Wiebe, who in turn baptized 18 others on 21 September 1869. Forward immersion in a flowing stream was the chosen method of baptism. They settled on the name "*Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde*," soon adding the "*Krimmer*" to distinguish it from the Mennonite Brethren Church which had just been founded in the Molotschna in 1860. The Molotschna group also baptized in a flowing stream by immersion, but unfortunately backwards!

The new church grew slowly; when it left for the United States in 1874 it numbered only about 40 members. All of the group emigrated except for three families. The travelers arrived in New York on 15 July 1874, then settled in Kansas.

The KMB church eventually had three congregations in Kansas, one in California, five in South Dakota and two in Saskatchewan. Reported membership of the 11 congregations in 1954 was 1,791. Outstanding leaders in the first third of the twentieth century were David E Harder, D M Hofer, J W Tschetter and missionary H C Bartel.

In 1960 most of the congregations joined the Mennonite Brethren Church.

SCHOOLS IN CRIMEA

SCHOOLS IN CRIMEA

Every Mennonite village in Russia and Ukraine, regardless of location or colony, started with an elementary school (*Dorfschule*). The villages in Crimea followed the same pattern. Each village started with a school in the centre of the village, together with a teacherage, and of course a qualified teacher. There were Teachers' Conferences in Crimea. Demonstration lessons were presented and discussed. The conferences stimulated and fostered professional interests.

There was a Crimean School Board, at first an affiliate of the Molotschna board, but later it became independent. The Board supervised the instruction of Religion and German in the Mennonite schools. David Gerhard Duerksen was a member of the school board and worked to raise the educational standards among the Mennonites of Crimea. J D Janzen was involved in the founding of schools in Karassan, the *Zentralschule* and the *Maedchenschule*. Other school subjects were under the control of Russian government agencies.

It took a considerable length of time, four decades, until secondary schools were founded in Crimea. At first there was thought to be no need, but also the necessary funds were lacking. If further education was desired the students usually attended the Ohrloff or Halbstadt

KARASSAN ZENTRALSCHULE

A *Zentralschule* was founded in Karassan in 1905. There was originally some controversy as to whether the school should be established in Karassan or Spat. The school was for boys only. Its program of study was for three years. An added feature was a small meteorological operation where students could study the weather.

The first teachers were Karl Friedrichsen, K Bergmann and Mr Ergler, a non-Mennonite. The various churches cooperated in the function of the school. Abraham H Unruh, originally from Barwenkovo, was appointed principal and teacher of religion in 1918.

The school operated with good results until the mid 1920s.

SPAT ZENTRALSCHULE

With the controversy about where to establish a *Zentralschule*, the Spat group decided to go it alone, and establish their own school. A new building was constructed, and dedicated in 1906. Two teacherages were also built in 1906, and a third in 1907.

Until then *Zentralschulen* had been for boys only. The Spat school also accepted girls. This remarkable feature assured that the classes would always be full.

There were good qualified teachers right from the beginning: Kornelius Janzen from Sagradovka, Franz Ediger and David Enns from Molotschna.

KARASSAN MAEDCHENSCHULE

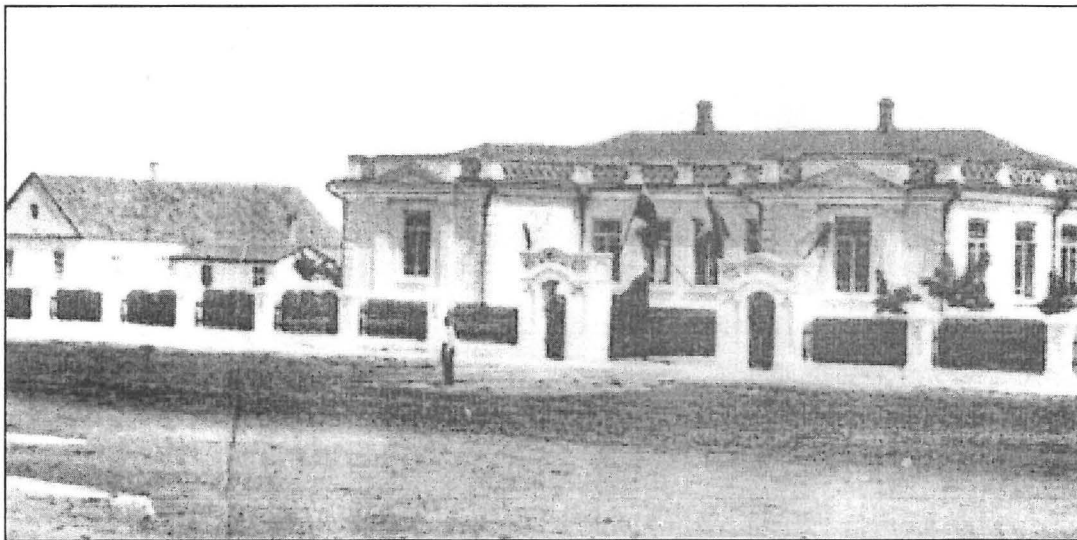
J D Janzen was involved in the founding of the Karassan *Maedchenschule* and early on was apparently one of the instructors

Sometime on or before 1910 the school was in operation

Continued on at least until 1915, when there were at 16 students, and teachers Maria Wilmsen and Maria Janzen



Dedication ceremony at the opening of the Karassan *Zentralschule*



Spat *Zentralschule*



Teacher and students of one of the classes
of the Karassan *Maedchenschule* (1910)



Karassan *Maedchenschule* in 1915, with teachers Maria Wilmsen
and Maria Dyck

TSCHONGRAW BIBLE SCHOOL (1918-1924)

Missionary on furlough, Johann J Wiens, responded to what he felt was a need for a Bible School in Russia. The Missions Committee of the Mennonite Brethren Conference favored the project, and promised support. Notice of this idea mentioned in *Die Friedensstimme* showed that other Christians were also interested. With the Missions Committee acceptance, the plan was implemented in the autumn of 1918. Location was in Tschongraw, Crimea, the village where Johann Wiens had settled. Heinrich J Braun, treasurer of the MB Conference, was appointed the second teacher. Because the school and students had great difficulty getting teaching materials, Heinrich donated books to the school from his own personal library. Gerhard J Reimer was also an appointee, early in the New Year of 1919. The 35 first year students had considerable difference in educational background, so they were divided into two levels. Abraham H Unruh, well educated teacher at Barwenkovo, had transferred to the Karassan *Zentralschule*. In the autumn of 1920 he was asked to join the teaching staff of the Bible School.

Eventually the school offered three years of education, with curriculum patterned somewhat after that of the German Baptist Seminary of Hamburg, which both Wiens and Braun had attended.

The number of students in the six years of operation was:

1918 - 1919	-	35 students
1919 - 1920	-	37 students
1920 - 1921	-	40 students
1921 - 1922	-	28 students
1922 - 1923	-	37 students
1923 - 1924	-	49 students

Total numbers, calculated year by year, was 226, although, because some of the students were there for a number of years, this represented only 104 specific individuals. Male to female ratio was 3:2. It was mentioned that the males were likely to be ministers or evangelists; while the females were there for self enrichment, or preparing to teach children or youth groups. Single to married ratio was also 3:2.

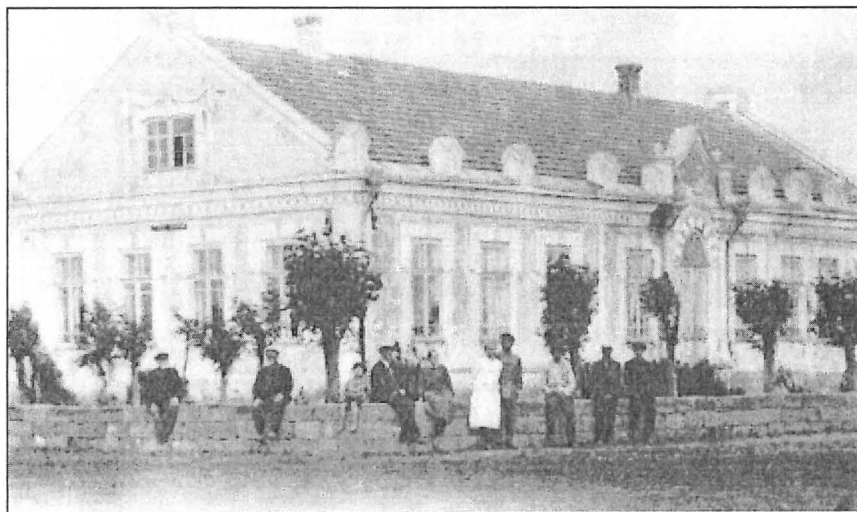
Graduates who completed the full course totaled 22. Of these 13 left Russia, 7 to Canada, 4 to the USA, 1 to Brazil, and 1 to Paraguay. Presumably the others stayed and worked in Russia.

It was remarked that the school had a good influence in the surrounding villages and churches. The students quite willingly participated in the local church programs, ministering, evangelizing and singing. As would be typical for a Mennonite institution at the time, the school had a fair-sized and well organized choir.

In the autumn of 1921 teacher Braun addressed the school and took his leave, soon after fleeing from Russia, since his life was in danger.

Operation of the school had some governmental opposition when the Bolsheviks gained full control of the region. In 1920 all teachers and students were arrested and committed to trial. At the hearings, however, it was established that the charges against the school were false, so all teachers and students were released. But the opponents simply bided their time. In March 1924, with the school having 49 students, local authorities closed it down. Despite petitions to the local Crimean government and to Moscow for permission to reopen, the requests were not granted.

Remarkably, three teachers of the Bible School, Wiens, Unruh, and Reimer were able to emigrate to Canada. There they founded the Winkler Bible School in 1925, under the leadership of Abraham H Unruh. He then later was also instrumental in the establishment of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg.



Tschongraw Bible School



Tschongraw Bible School, Teachers, Students and Committee Members

WELL
KNOWN
MENNONITE
PEOPLE

WELL KNOWN MENNONITE INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVED AND WORKED IN CRIMEA

DUERKSEN, DAVID GERHARD (see picture at end of section)

Born 1850, probably in Margenau, Molotschna

Largely self taught, became very successful teacher and minister

Eventually joined the MB Church and was appointed as traveling evangelist

He was called "Prince among Mennonite preachers" because of his speaking skill

In 1897 moved from Margenau, to Schoental, Crimea

The MB congregation offered him the leadership, and on 23 May 1899 he was ordained
as elder of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Crimea by Elder David

Schellenberg and Elder Aaron Lepp

The congregation was then independent

A new building, seating capacity 600, was built in Schoental

Duerksen served faithfully, and with great blessing

He was an outstanding teacher; was a member of the school board and worked to raise
Mennonite educational standards in Crimea

In 1910 the congregation had 140 families, 330 members, with all dependents totaling
880 persons

David Gerhard Duerksen died 29 July 1910 in Spat, after a nine month illness

DUERKSEN (DURKSEN), MARTIN (see picture at end of section)

Born 8 May 1919 on the trail his parents were traveling between Terek in the
Caucasus and Crimea

Parents Johann Duerksen and Katharina Heinrichs

Youngest of 13 children

Lived in Menlertschik, Crimea, until the age of ten

1929 via Moscow to Germany, then Fernheim, Paraguay, in the Chaco

Elementary and highschool education and one year Bible school

Taught six years, then 1945-1948 studied at Bible seminary in Argentina

1950-1964 MCC worker in Argentina

Worked periodically with the Lengua Indians in Paraguay

1967 to Canada; 1969 began German ministry with "Gospel Light Hour"

Married Kaethe Duerksen 11 January 1941, seven children, including Frank, orthopaedic
surgeon, specialist in leprosy surgery

Very interested in Mennonite history, especially events in Crimea. Chaired a
well attended reunion of people from Crimea in 1975, and edited a book

"Die Krim war unsere Heimat"

Health deteriorated, died 16 February 1995

Called a "dedicated minister and missionary."

DYCK, PETER ISAAK

Born 20 April 1900 in Karassan, Crimea

Parents Isaak Dyck and Maria Pankratz

Probably attended *Dorfschule* and *Zentralschule* in Karassan

Kommerzschule in Alexanderkrone in Molotschna, then *Gymnasium* in Simferopol,
which he completed in 1919
Medical faculty at University of Simferopol, some of the time during the famine of
1921-1922
Studies periodically interrupted by the Russian Civil War
Peter spent some of this time in a non-combatant service preparing documentation for
various soldiers, including Mennonites
Interned at University of Kasany, on the Volga, and completed his medical studies in
1926
Worked at Muntau Hospital 1926-1928, where he met nurse Maria Bartel
They married 5 August 1928, had four children
Eventually escaped to Germany in 1930
Studied tropical medicine in Hamburg
Migrated to Brazil, where he and wife worked for many years
Died 2 June 1987 at the age of 87 years

FRIEDRICHSEN, PETER

Born 10 July 1866 on the Tashchenak Estate, Ukraine
His family probably originally came from Palatinate
Baptized 3 June 1884 at Sarabash, Crimea
Married Sarah Martens 25 April 1891; she died
Then Peter married widow Maria Wiens Fast on 23 August 1920
He was well educated; deeply grounded in the Scriptures
In 1889 elected as minister by the Ettingerbrunn, later Busav congregation
Ordained as minister by Elder Heinrich Martens on 15 May 1903
After the death of H Martens he was elected elder of the church, and ordained as
elder 7 May 1906 by Elder Abraham Friesen of the Karassan Church
His ministry extended well beyond the boundaries of his own large congregation
Very active; preached 2,015 sermons in addition to all his other pastoral duties
In addition to his work as minister and elder he was also a farmer, and held a number
of other public positions
Peter lived in the village of Busav-Aktachi (Ettingerbrunn)
Tended to be a quiet person, preferring to reading a book to engaging in discussion
When it came to witnessing, or supporting a good cause, however, he was apparently very
talkative
He was considered to be a “fearless preacher of the Gospel”, free of legalism
Peter died 18 July 1926, deeply mourned by his own congregation, but also the wider
Mennonite community

FRIESEN, PETER MARTIN (see picture at end of section)

Born 1849 in Sparrau, Molotschna
Parents Martin Jakob Friesen and Helena Klassen
Fifth of seven children
Graduated from Halbstadt *Zentralschule*
Studied in Switzerland, then Odessa and Moscow

Teacher in Halbstadt *Zentralschule*, then principal 1880-1886

Married Susanna Fast; had six children

Son Paul served in *Sanitaetsdienst*

To Wohldemfuerst, then Odessa, then an estate to rest

1898-1911 lived in Sevastopol

Organized a church, involved in political organizations

For years worked on extensive history of the Mennonite Brethren Church

Finally completed and published in 1911

Moved to Tiege, Molotschna in 1911

Died 19 October 1914 in Tiege

JANZEN, J D (see picture at end of section)

Born 1874 in Gnadenfeld, Molotschna

Graduated from *Zentralschule*

Age 17 teacher on an estate, then in 2 years in Franztal

To Karassan 1905, working as accountant

Chairman of school society which founded *Zentralschule* and *Maedchenschule* in Karassan

He taught in the *Maedchenschule* in Karassan

1918 to Sevastopol as business representative

1924 to Mexico, then 1926 to Canada

Died 1948 in BC

KLASSEN, ABRAM JAKOB

Born 3 December 1884 in Ohrloff, Molotschna

Parents Jakob P Klassen and Agnes Goerz, daughter of Elder Abram Goerz of Ohrloff

In 1893 parents moved to Spat, Crimea, where they had purchased a farm

Abram attended elementary school in Spat

Then he went to Ohrloff *Zentralschule*, from which he graduated in three years

Appeared to be above usual intelligence

Mother in particular influenced him in character development and his Christian life

Father died 18 August 1902

Abram, the eldest son, helped his mother manage the farm and raise his younger brothers and sisters

Mother married again October 1903; Abram was relieved of some of his responsibilities

He studied at home and had private tutoring to prepare himself for the teachers' exam

Teacher in Ebenfeld, Samara, for two years (1904-1906)

Forstei at Alt-Berdyansk; worked as meteorologist

Married Agnes A Esau October 1910

With wife spent one year in the Froese business of Barwenkovo - to learn business practice

Thereafter opened his own business in Spat, Crimea. Business did well

With outbreak of World War I drafted into *Sanitaetsdienst*, serving first in Simferopol, then in a sanatorium in Szaki, a spa in Crimea

Was forced to close his business during this time
 After the war was elected as minister by his home congregation at Spat, then ordained
 He was elected as Crimea representative for the churches (KfK)
 The Revolution and subsequent Civil War brought him, like many others, into financial ruin, so he turned to farming
 Spring 1925 he was visited by brother Peter, who had followed Abram as teacher in Ebenfeld. Purpose was to convince Abram to migrate to Canada or Mexico
 But Abram felt that his obligation was to remain in Russia, he was more needed than ever
 January 1926 real struggles began. With a colleague J J Wiebe of Menlerchick, was given the option of resigning from the ministry with promise of full citizenship after that. They did not accept this offer.
 November 1926 Abram wrote his brother Peter that he had spent a month visiting all members he could find - to serve them with the Word.
 28 October 1928 imprisoned in Simferopol for 32 days
 In 1929 Abram and J J Wiebe blamed for the rush of Mennonites to Moscow to get exit visas. He was imprisoned, tortured and beaten 12-19 hours a day.
 Abram Klassen, J J Wiebe and three others sentenced to death. On 6 April 1930 sentence reduced to 10 years exile in the far north
 In the meantime wife and children driven from their home on Feb 2, 1930. Eventually allowed to return home after a time in prison
 Abram's health deteriorated; occasionally helped by food packages from Canada and from his home in Spat
 Worked at an office in Archangel region, village of Jeretnaja; was trusted in supervisory capacity
 Gradually weaker; coughed up blood on two occasions.
 To hospital in Sibulon
 Died 5 July 1931 (likely of tuberculosis)
 Wife originally informed of his severe illness and wanted to visit him. She arrived two days after his death

KROEKER, ABRAHAM JAKOB (see picture at end of section)

Born 11 December 1863 in Rosenort, Molotschna
 Became village school teacher 1881 at the age of 18
 1889 joined the MB Church and worked as missionary in Romania for 3 years
 1894 moved to Spat, taking up farming
 Became active writer, published *Christlicher Familienkalender* and *Christlicher Abreiskalendar*; 1903 published book: *Pastor Wuest, der grosse Erweckungsprediger in den deutschen Kolonien Russlands*
 With cousin Jakob Kroeker began publishing the first Mennonite newspaper in Russia, *Die Friedensstimme*, first printed in Berlin in 1903
 1904 moved to Halbstadt where he continued with the newspaper, but also helped establish publishing house Raduga
 Continued with *Die Friedensstimme* until he had to flee from Russia in 1921

Migrated to Winnipeg, then Mountain Lake, Minnesota
He continued to write articles and books until he died 22 November 1944
It is considered that he was the pioneer of Mennonite letters in Russia

KROEKER, JAKOB JAKOB (see picture at end of section)

Born 31 October 1872 in Gnadental, Molotschna; was cousin of Abraham Jakob Kroeker
Obtained teaching certificate and taught in Menlerchik, Crimea
Studied 4 years at Mission Seminary, Hamburg, Germany
Back to Crimea, ordained as minister and elder of the MB Church
Worked together with David Duerksen as itinerant minister
With cousin Abraham Kroeker founded the first Mennonite newspaper
Die Friedensstimme in 1903; continued to work with it until 1910
1906 moved to Halbstadt, where he helped to found Raduga Publishing House
Worked with Dr Friederich Baedeker, traveling around Russia
1910 moved to Wernigerode, Germany; continued theological studies and writing
Founded "*Licht am Osten*" a missionary society which helped educate Russian preachers
Maintained ties with Mennonite world; delivered talk at 1925 Mennonite World
Conference in Basel, Switzerland
1945 moved to Stuttgart; died there 12 December 1948

LANGEMANN, JOHANN (see picture at end of section)

Came from Margenau, Molotschna
Learned the shoe-making trade as a youth
Migrated to Crimea in 1881
Played a leading role in the establishment of Spat and Menlerchik
In partnership with a Mr Chimtzov, founded a factory in Spat in 1894 to manufacture
agricultural machinery. When Mr. Chimtzov died his heirs sold their portion to
Langemann, so he became the sole owner. He steadily enlarged the factory, by
1914 employing 450 workers
In partnership with J Janzen owned a large steam mill in Spat
Died of cancer in 1908

MARTENS, HEINRICH

Head of the Agricultural Union of Crimea, starting somewhat after 1920
Union aided farmers by supplying seed grain and machinery
It owned its own grain farm in Danilovka
It attempted to train tractor operators when the American relief tractors arrived
in the early 1920s
All this said to be under the skilled leadership of Martens
With closing down of opportunities Martens got to Germany via Moscow in 1929
Along with 700 refugees migrated to Brazil
He became one of the leading founders of the Witmarsum Colony in the Krauel

MARTINS, ANNA (ANYA) (see picture at end of section)

Born 10 May 1898 on the Montanai Estate, near Eupatoria, Crimea
Parents were Wilhelm Wilhelm Martins and Maria Dyck
Anna graduated from medicine at the University of Simferopol, 1923 or 1924

Never married
Migrated to Canada in 1926
Assume that she participated in some post-graduate psychiatric training in Canada
Ran a psychiatric practice in Hamilton, Ontario, with office right next to her home
Died 1985 in Hamilton
Buried in Ruddel Saskatchewan, where other members of her family are buried

REMPEL, HERMANN ARON

Born 1856, Gnadenfeld, Molotschna
Zentralschule in Halbstadt
To Karassan as a young man, teacher in the elementary school
Elected as minister by the Mennonite Church in 1903
When Abraham Friesen retired, Hermann was elected elder, some time after 1910
He and several other ministers worked for spiritual awakening
Evoked some strong opposition
Rempel and several other ministers founded a new congregation named Evangelical
Mennonite Brethren Church in 1921. Rempel was elected elder
The church stressed repentance, conversion and sanctification
Immersion baptism
In one year had 137 members and 7 ministers
Church grew rapidly, but with communist religious persecution spiritual life came to a
standstill
1929 he and his family attempted to escape Russia via Moscow
Instead sent to Memrik, where he worked in a coal mine
During holidays he even visited his orphaned church in Crimea
Exiled to Siberia where as a result of mistreatment he died
Wife and sons accompanied him to exile, and also died there

SAWATZKY, PETER JAKOB

Born 14 June 1886 in Wiesenfeld, Pavlograd District, province of Ekaterinoslav
Youngest of 16 children of Jakob J Sawatzky and Maria Huebert
Zentralschule in Halbstadt
Two years teacher training, then taught near Gulyaipole
But preferred medicine. Studied at *Gymnasium* in Ekaterinoslav, then medicine at
New Russian University in Odessa beginning in 1908
Married Margaretha Reimer; two children, Woldemar and Agnes
Woldemar born 22 July 1922 in Karassan, also became physician
To Bethania, then Odessa
About 1917 to Karassan despite Revolution and Civil War
1923 settled in Lutheran district at Naimann
Moved to Feodosiya to help in education of children
Increasing jealousy of colleagues
18 November 1937 arrested and imprisoned
Released from exile and returned to family in 1946, resumed practice
1956 retired and moved to Karaganda, Kazakhstan, where the children lived

Died 22 November 1962

SCHROEDER, PETER HEINRICH (see picture at end of section)

Born 23 September 1838 in Sandhof, West Prussia

Family moved to South Russia likely in 1850s, probably to Molotschna

Married Katharina Martens, widow of estate owner Wilhelm Martens, about 1861

Through Katharina he had access to part of the land in the Taschtschenak region

2 children, Anna, Heinrich

Wife Katharina died 1864. Peter married again, Maria Klassen

Had further 8 children, 6 reaching adulthood

Purchased large tracts of land in Crimea, beginning 1867 until 1891

Did not cultivate the land himself, but leased out the land to Russians and Mennonites

At least 7 villages on his land

Towards the end charged 6R rent per dess plus up to 1/3 of the crop

Peter died 30 August 1896; holdings then were 10,614 dess valued at 1,046,200R

His will gave 1,500 dess to each of the children of Maria Klassen, lesser amounts to the others, since they also received land elsewhere

SCHROEDER, PETER PETER (see picture at end of section)

Born 3 December 1866 in Melitopol, eldest of the 8 children born to Peter Heinrich and second wife Maria Klassen

Spent youth on parental estate at Taschtschenak; further schooling, likely *Realschule* and *Kommerzschule* in Melitopol

To university in Kharkov in the field of commerce

Fairly early took up residence on his Crimean land holdings in order to supervise them

Had no manor house, so he lived with his sister Margaretha in nearby Novonikolsk

1912 elected to the Duma as a "Progressive Party" member.

Worked on committees, but never actually spoke in the Duma.

Term ended in 1917

Disposed of his estate lands before the communists took over, likely converted into gold or jewelry

1918 to Simferopol, then in 2-3 years to Zaporozhye, then to Chortitza

Lived with Margarethe and her husband David Goossen, quiet, unassuming life

Died in Chortitza 6 June 1942

UNRUH, ABRAHAM HEINRICH (see picture at end of section)

Born 5 April 1878 in Temir-Bulat, Crimea

Father died prematurely, mother unable to manage the whole family

Abraham sent to live with his uncle, Kornelius Unruh, headmaster of the Ohrloff *Zentralschule*

Graduated from *Zentralschule*, then teachers' college

Age 17 village teacher at Menlerchik, Crimea, for 8 years

Converted, became MB

Married Katharina Toews of Spat

1903 to Barwenkowo, taught elementary school

Elected to ministry and ordained

Instructed in German by brother Benjamin and earned teaching certificate
 1915-1917 served as medical orderly
 Taught German and Religion in Barwenkowo *Kommerzschnule*
 1918 principal of Karassan *Kommerzschnule*
 1920-1924 taught in Tschongraw Bible School
 When Bible School was closed down, he emigrated to Canada January 1925
 He was one of the founders of the Winkler Bible School
 1944 one of the founders of advanced Bible School which became Mennonite Brethren
 Bible College. 1954 resigned so he could more actively travel and preach
 2 June 1938 Honorary Doctorate from Bethel College, Newton, Kansas
 Continued to write and preach
 Wrote history of MB Church published in 1954
 Also wrote a considerable number of shorter articles
 Died 15 January 1961

UNRUH, BENJAMIN HEINRICH (see picture at end of section)

Born 17 September 1881 in Temir-Bulat, Crimea
 Gifted and eager student, elementary school in home village and neighboring Tukulchak
 1895 to Ohrloff *Zentralschnule* where his uncle Kornelius Unruh was the principal
 Then teacher training, school in Basel 1900-1907
 To Halbstadt, where he taught German and Religion at the *Kommerzschnule* and the
 Maedchenschnule
 Was very well thought of as a teacher
 Elected to Mennonite congress in Ohrloff, in 1919 chair of *Mennozentrum*
 On Study Commission to work on Mennonite migration from Russia
 Published a large number of books and pamphlets on theology, church history and
 Mennonite history
 Eventually moved to Karlsruhe, Germany
 Helped in some of the migration of Mennonites through Moscow in 1929-1930
 1947 honorary doctorate in theology from University of Heidelberg
 Was unfortunately quite sympathetic to the Nazi cause and influenced some of the
 Paraguayan refugees in this regard
 Died 12 May 1959 in Germany

UNRUH, HEINRICH BENJAMIN

Born 24 May 1847 in Waldheim, Molotschna
 Moved with parents to Schwestertal, Crimea, then when he married he moved to
 Temir-Bulat
 Economically struggled to raise a large family, 9 living children
 All the sons were involved in religious work
 Gerhard and Kornelius missionaries in India;
 Abraham teacher and preacher.
 Benjamin teacher and leader
 Served Crimean Mennonite Church as minister beginning in 1874
 Following the death of the first elder, Jakob Wiebe, Unruh was elected elder

of the Mennonite Church based in Karassan in 1880
Talented, and beloved by his congregation
Had to visit and serve the widely scattered groups of his congregation
Died of pneumonia 17 October 1883 at age of 36

WIEBE, JAKOB A

Born 1836 in Margenau, Molotschna
Earned his own living working as hired hand
Worked as a minister in the Kleine Gemeinde
After marriage he and several others bought a Tatar village in Crimea, founded
Annenfeld (Annovka)
A Kleine Gemeinde minister preached to the group of settlers, a number of settlers
experienced conversion
Formed a new group, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church; immersion baptism,
forwards, in 1869
Initially 18 members; more Molotschna Kleine Gemeinde settlers joined
Most of the group migrated to the US in the 1870s, together with Elder Wiebe,
settling in Kansas
Resigned as elder in 1900
He died in 1921

WIEBE, JOHANN JOHANN

Born 15 May 1884, in Schottenruh (Diurmen), Crimea
His parents were Johann J Wiebe from Altona, Molotschna, and Anna Unruh, who
came from Crimea
Having completed elementary school in Schottenruh he continued his
education in Ohrloff, where he attended *Zentralschule* for three years
His uncle, Kornelius B Unruh was teacher in Ohrloff at that time
Upon graduation from Ohrloff Johann attended the teachers' college in Halbstadt,
then passed the teacher examinations in Melitopol.
At first he was teacher at Busav, then in the village of Menlerchik in Crimea
Here he met and married Justina Dueck, who came from Menlerchik
With the onset of World War I Johann was drafted into the All-Russian branch of the
Semstwo Sanitaetsdienst
After three years of service he returned to his home church, and was promptly
called to be a minister, and soon after was ordained
Circumstances made it difficult to continue his teaching career; he became a farmer
Johann's activities as evangelist, as a member of an inter church committee, as a legal
representative for young draftees, and his frequent trips to Simferopol drew
the attention of the Soviet bureaucrats. As a result he was jailed in 1928.
He was soon released, but had to regularly report to the police.
When in 1929 many Mennonites appeared in Moscow in attempts to migrate, Wiebe
and others were blamed. Together with four other ministers Wiebe was jailed
and condemned to death. After 27 days in solitary confinement the sentences
were reduced to 10 years exile on the island of Solowki on the White Sea.

After these occurrences all prisoners from Crimea were routinely sentenced to Archangel in the north of Russia. From Archangel Wiebe and the others were transferred to Solowki.

In 1937, after 8 years of imprisonment, second-hand information was that Wiebe had been moved to the Ural region. In the meantime the Wiebe family had actually been exiled to the Urals as well.

Apparently because of his hard work and his excellent behavior his sentence had been reduced by two years. Johann wrote at the time "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith "

Since then no more news...

WIENS, JOHANN GERHARD (see picture at end of section)

Born 3 August 1874 in Steinthal, Molotschna

Youngest of seven children of Gerhard Wiens and Susanna Friesen

Elementary and secondary education in Molotschna

Attended Baptist Seminary in Hamburg, Germany 1899-1903

Baptized Mennonite Brethren June 1900

Married Helena Hildebrand; two sons and a foster daughter

Wife Helena died, married Helena Wiens

To India as missionary 1904-1910

1918 lived in Tschongraw; by MB Missions Committee appointed as leader and teacher of the Tschongraw Bible School

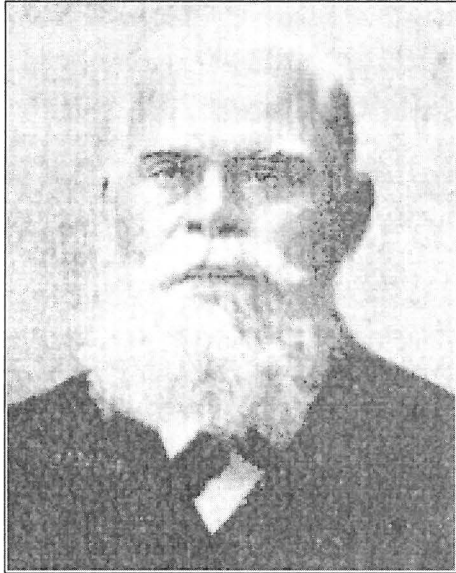
1924 school was shut down by the communist government

Migrated to Canada. Abraham Unruh established the Winkler Bible School in 1925, with Wiens as one of the teachers

He taught in Winkler for 23 years, until 1949

Johann Gerhard Wiens died 2 January 1951

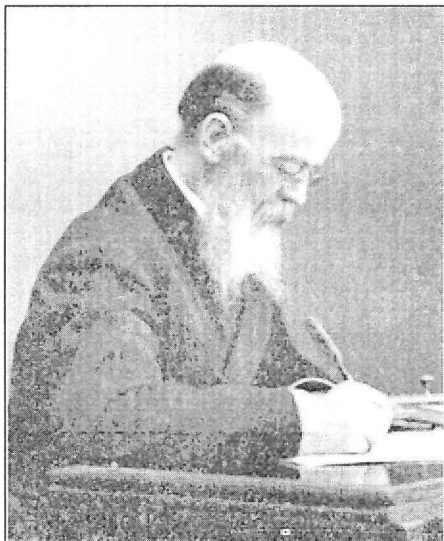
Well-known individuals who lived and worked in Crimea



David Gerhard Duerksen
pastor - teacher



Martin Duerksen
evangelist



Peter Martin Friesen
historian -writer



J D Janzen
teacher - businessman

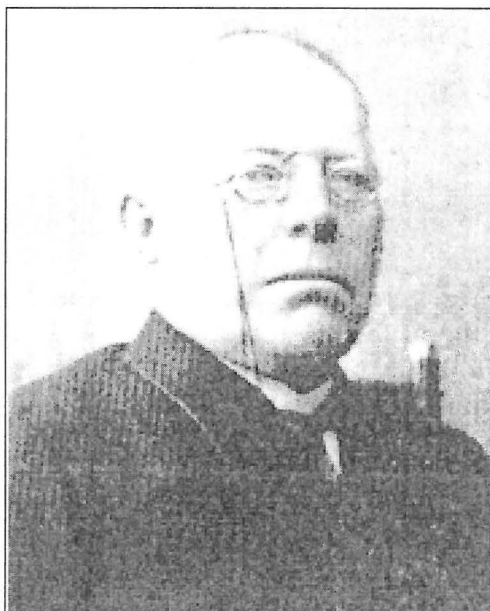
Well-known individuals who lived and worked in Crimea



Abraham Jakob Kroeker
editor



Jakob Jakob Kroeker
editor - evangelist

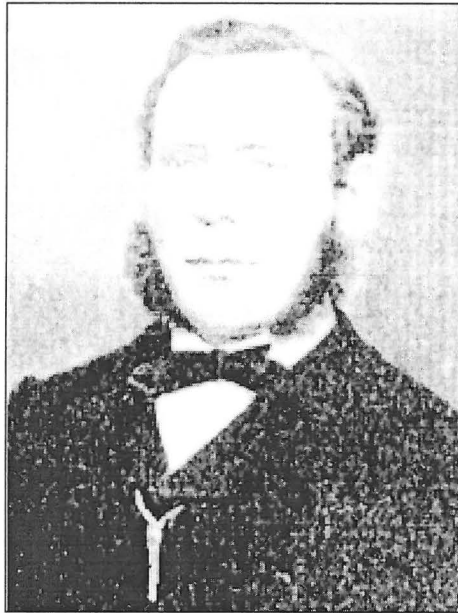


Johann Langemann
businessman



Anna Martins
physician - psychiatrist

Well-known individuals who lived and worked in Crimea



Peter Heinrich Schroeder
estate owner



Peter Peter Schroeder
estate owner - Duma member



Abraham Heinrich Unruh
Bible teacher



Benjamin Heinrich Unruh
teacher - politician

Well-known individuals who lived and worked in Crimea



Johann Gerhard Wiens
Bible teacher

MIGRATION

1873-1880

MIGRATION 1873-1880

FAMILIES LEAVING SOUTH RUSSIA

Chortitza - 580 families - 3,240 people

Bergthal - 440 families - 3,000 people (virtually the entire colony)

Molotschna - (numbers not certain) 784 families - 4,500 people

Crimea - 107 families (about 642 individuals)

Two specific groups of people are known to have migrated from Crimea

From Hierschau, Molotschna to Bruderfeld, Crimea, in early 1860s

Then 1873-1874 - 8 families, 47 people to USA

Krimmer *Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde* - said to consist of 20 families (likely about 120 people)

Left from Annenfeld (Annovka) near Simferopol,

arrived in New York on 15 July 1874, via S S City of Brooklyn -

Liverpool to New York, settled in Kansas

The others from Crimea migrated singly or in separate small family groups

HIERSCHAU-BRUDERFELD

Five families left Hierschau in the early 1860s (1861-1864), moving to Crimea, likely founding the little village of Bruderfeld in the north-east plain. Most of the people of this village then seem to have migrated to the United States in the 1870s

Tobias Unruh (50) farmer

S S Hammonia - Hamburg New York, arr 15 Aug 1873

Total 11 people, to Parker, South Dakota (Hiebert, p 68)

Wife Katharina (nee Sperling) (47)

Peter (22), Kornelius (16), Heinrich (9), Tobias (9), Anna (8), Maria (7), Aganetha (4)

Johann (26), Katharina (23)

Jakob H Pankratz (53) farmer

S S Herder - Hamburg New York arr 20 Aug 1874

Wife Katharina (38)

Heinrich (24), Peter (21), Johann (20), Franz (18), Elisabeth (27), Abraham (9), Anna (7),

Jakob (5), Wilhelm (1 ½), Marie (2 mo)

S S Silesia - Hamburg New York arr 8 July 1874

There were 28 people in all, aboard the S S Silesia who had roots in Hierschau

Jakob Loewen (55) farmer

Marie (50) wife

Heinrich (24), Kornelius (22), Marie (16), Franz (15)

Jakob Loewen (31) farmer

Helena (25) wife

Jakob (7), Marie (3), Helene (11 mo), Katharina (1 mo)

Isaak Loewen (29) farmer
 Justine (25) wife
 Heinrich (1 mo)
 Dietrich Loewen (25) farmer
 Sarah (25) wife
 Friedrich (4), Marie (6 mo)
 Engbrecht, Peter (65) farmer
 Margaret (62) wife
 Anna (25)
 Beier (Beyer), Johann (24) farmer
 Aganetha (22) wife (daughter of Peter Engbrecht)

Altogether there were 8 families with a total of 47 people

Many of the people originally from Hierschau settled in Turner County, South Dakota
 Jakob L Loewen moved to Hierschau with his parents when the village was founded in 1848.
 They then moved to Bruderfeld in Crimea in the early 1860s, then migrated to the USA,
 Turner County, near Parker, in 1874. Here they attended the Bruderfeld Church. In 1902
 the Jakob Loewens moved to Saskatchewan, to a place near Waldheim, attending a
 church called Bruderfeld.
 (Hierschau, pp 104, 105)

Sources:

Hiebert, Clarence, Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need, Faith and Life Press, Newton Kansas
 1974
 Huebert, Helmut T, Hierschau: An Example of Russian Mennonite Life, Springfield Publishers,
 Winnipeg, Canada, 1986

KRIMMER MENNONITEN BRUEDERGEMEINDE LIST

Said to consist of 20 families (likely about 120 people). Left from Annenfeld (Annovka) near
 Simferopol, departed from Liverpool, arrived in New York on 15 July 1874, via S S City of
 Brooklyn. Eventually settled in Kansas

Actually there were 32 families traveling on the SS City of Brooklyn, consisting of 165
 individuals. Not absolutely certain that they were all from the KMB group
 Definite members were:

Wiebe, Jakob (Elder), age 37
 Wife Juliana (40)
 Katherine (12)
 Jakob (3)

Johanna (1)

Harder, Johann, age 51

Wife Elisabeth (35)

Johanna (12)

Elisabeth (11)

Abraham (8)

Isbrand (7)

Heinrich (3)

David (1)

Berg, Peter (Elder). Age 28

Wife Anna (23)

Peter (2)

Andreas (1)

REVOLUTION
CIVIL WAR
COMMUNIST
TAKEOVER

REVOLUTION, CIVIL WAR and the COMMUNIST TAKEOVER

In the Russian Revolution and Civil War General Anton Denikin was initially the military commander of the White Army. With increasing criticism and emotional exhaustion, he resigned in April of 1920 in favour of General Pyotr Wrangel. The White Army in time had to retreat southwards, into Crimea. With increasing pressure from the communist Red Army, General Wrangel and thousands of his forces needed to escape. They were ferried off to safety in Turkey by remnants of the Russian Imperial Navy, which became known as Wrangel's Fleet.

But much of Wrangel's army, and of course the civilians in Crimea, remained under Communist control. At least 50,000 prisoners of war and civilians were executed by shooting or hanging by the Communists at the end of 1920. There were undoubtedly a considerable number of Mennonites among those executed, both those who had been with the White Army, and civilians who lived in Crimea.

In the 1920s the life under the Communist regime in Crimea was much the same as that experienced by Mennonites in other parts of South Russia.

In the early 1920s all of the estate owners were either driven off their property or left of their own accord. By 1923 all of the estates seem to have been abandoned. They were taken over by the surrounding people or were incorporated into collective or cooperative farms. In some cases the buildings were used, in others, such as Alatsch, all buildings were destroyed. A number of the estate owners were murdered, for example the Dick family, who were executed by the Reds in 1919, and Philipp Wiebe and his son in 1920.

In the early and mid 1920s the Mennonites of Crimea had the same opportunities as those of the rest of southern Russia to escape. When the Tschongraw Bible School was closed in 1924, all of the teachers, Abraham H Unruh, Johann G Wiens and Gerhard J Reimer, were able to emigrate to Canada. J D Janzen first migrated to Mexico in 1924 then to Canada in 1926. Abraham Jakob Kroeker was able to flee from Russia in 1921, first to Canada, and then the USA.

Many of those who had not managed to migrate from Russia in the mid 1920s then heard that it might be possible to escape via Moscow in 1929/1930. At least 15,000 Mennonites collected in Moscow, hoping for special exit visas. Actually somewhat over 6,000 did receive documents which allowed them to depart via Riga and Germany, but many bitterly disappointed people were either shipped back home or were exiled to northern Russia or Siberia. From Kadagai some people were able to flee to Canada. From Ebenfeld 13 families (63 individuals) were able to emigrate, while 20 families (92 individuals) were sent back. In 1930 all Sarona residents were exiled to Archangel, the Caucasus or Kazakhstan, and the estate/village was turned into a collective farm. Eight families, consisting of husbands, wives and a total of 34 children escaped to Paraguay. One husband was exiled, while his wife and two sons were able to go to Paraguay. Oddly, one family from Menlerchik was able to escape to Paraguay, while another was sent into exile.

In the 1930s Stalin's brutal treatment of perfectly innocent people became more obvious. Many of the remaining Mennonite men were arrested, imprisoned, then sent into exile. Most were never seen again. In 1941, after the German invasion had begun, the Soviet policy was to transport as many of the "aliens" as far east as possible. It was as a result of this policy that entire Mennonite villages were mobilized and transported out of Crimea, with the ultimate aim of

sending them to the far north, Siberia or Kazakhstan. The travels of the people of Tschongraw, first northwards, then finally into the Molotschna was part of this scheme, which did not quite work out according to the Soviet plan. It is likely that all of the Mennonite villages had similar plans for moving their citizens out of Crimea.



General Pyotr Wrangel



Mennonite women working on a Kolkhoz in Crimea late 1920s or early 1930s

THE CRIMEAN GYPSIES (DIE KRIMMER ZEGEUNER)

Tschongraw was a Mennonite village in Crimea, originally founded in 1912 by Gerhard Wiens. It was a beautiful village with houses built of stone topped by tiled roofs; ample orchards provided plums, apples, apricots, pears and cherries. Besides the usual cereal grains the farmers also grew sunflowers and cotton. Tschongraw flourished and even had a Bible School in operation from 1918-1924. With the Communist takeover the villagers suffered the same fate as did Mennonites all over the Soviet Union. The church ceased to function and the building was used by the school. A collective farm was established in the region about 1931, with the large Wiens establishment becoming the storage area for farm machinery. In the Purge of 1936-1938 a number of men were "taken" from Tschongraw. Among them were:

Jakob Janzen (taken in 1936, then released in two months)

Franz T Teichrieb (November 24, 1936)

Nicolai Huebert (January 30, 1937)

Abram Hildebrand (February, 1938)

Franz Warkentin (1938).

Most were never seen again.

On August 16, 1941, all Mennonites were ordered to leave Tschongraw; they were sent to the station at Bijuk in wagons. As the wagon train lumbered along, the villagers joined voices in the hymn..."*Von der Erde reiss mich los, mache meinen Glauben gross...*" At Bijuk they were put on trains which headed north. Their train was stopped at Melitopol for two days, where there were another 17 or 18 trains of refugees, then headed further north to Zaporozhye, where it arrived August 24. They were obviously near the war zone (Germany had invaded Russia on June 22, 1941, and the front was rapidly moving eastward), since the refugees could hear the rumble of cannons. The train was halted near the railway station and basically could not move, since German shells from across the Dniepr would straddle it when it tried to pull away. The Tschongraw group felt that things were just too dangerous, so they fled on foot, carrying from the train only what they had grabbed in panic. A group of over 100 people, including children, walked about four kilometres to the Russian village of Balabino. In general they headed south and east. They tended to stay out of villages, sending children to ask for permission to sleep in the barns and beg for food.

In this way the Tschongrawers wandered for about a month, finally reaching the Molotschna Mennonite Colony. They divided into two groups, making it easier for people to help them, then walked from village to village. Their reception was generally good - they were given food and occasionally even work. At Fuerstenwerder they were divided among the homes, and the collective farm cooked and baked for them and gave the men jobs.

When they reached the next village, Gnadenheim, the Tschongrawers were taken into custody and ordered to go to the neighbouring village, Friedensdorf. Here they were all registered on September 28 or 29, then ordered to board trains at Tschernigowka, to be sent to Siberia. The group was taken by wagons, through Landskrone and Hierschau. Possibly because of poor weather and muddy roads they stopped in Waldheim, where they were put up in the club house of the Neufeld mill. The Tschongrawers all stayed in one building, with a guard at the

door who registered them as they came and went. They were told to prepare for a three-day train trip, and since they had nothing, they started begging to obtain supplies. Waldheim had already been covered by many beggars, so they went to the neighbouring villages, including Hierschau, to obtain food, blankets and pillows.

The group was informed that all men 16 to 65 years of age were to collect at the headquarters in Waldheim at 10 AM September 30. The men went, were taken into a room, then marched away. Some were never seen or heard from again. Presumably they were sent to Siberian or northern Russian labour camps and died there.

Of the Tschongraw group these men were taken:

Jakob Janzen - husband of Anna Janzen

Gerhard Janzen - son

Jakob Janzen - son

Gerhard Toews - husband of Olga Toews

Peter Wiens - son of Justina Huebert (formerly Wiens)

Franz Klassen - husband of Aganetha Klassen

Nicolai Enns - husband of Maria Enns

Heinrich Enns - son

Nicolai Enns - son

Gerhard Huebert - brother of the Huebert girls

Johann (Hans) Warkentin - husband of Maria Warkentin

Johann (Hans) Hildebrand - brother of Abram Hildebrand

Gerhard Warkentin

The remaining refugees stayed in Waldheim a few more days, still trying to beg for supplies, although it was becoming increasingly difficult to get anything.

On October 2 they were taken to the railway station Stulnewo by wagon. From there they were to be loaded onto trains and transported further behind the Russian lines. Every day more people arrived from the surrounding villages, until there were about 7,000 collected at Stulnewo - all camping out in the open. They used simple tin cans, which had been collected from the neighbouring villages, for cooking. They washed their clothing in the near-by river, then bathed in the river till their clothes dried.

It soon became obvious that the Russians would not be able to evacuate all the refugees. Explosions could be heard in the distance when the various major buildings and factories were blown up, such as the Neufeld mill in Waldheim. The retreating Russians tried to burn down some of the granaries near Stulnewo - the refugees could see the fires blazing through the night.

The morning of October 6 was very still, not even the trees moved. Since no one seemed to be in charge, the refugees scattered away from Stulnewo. The Tschongraw group went south into the Molotschna and settled in Hierschau. That day German and Rumanian troops occupied the area.

The native Hierschauer had themselves also been sent to Stulnewo to be evacuated, and were now also returning home. The buildings of the village had been left intact, so they simply moved back into their own homes. The Tschongraw group was housed in a creamery building - a total of nine families (39 people) crammed into two rooms. The families were (with most of the men missing by now):

Jakob Janzens
Gerhard Toews's
Franz Teichriebs
Heinrich Hueberts
Franz Klassens
Nicolai Enns's
Nicolai Hueberts
Franz Warkentins (Jr)
Franz Warkentins (Sr)

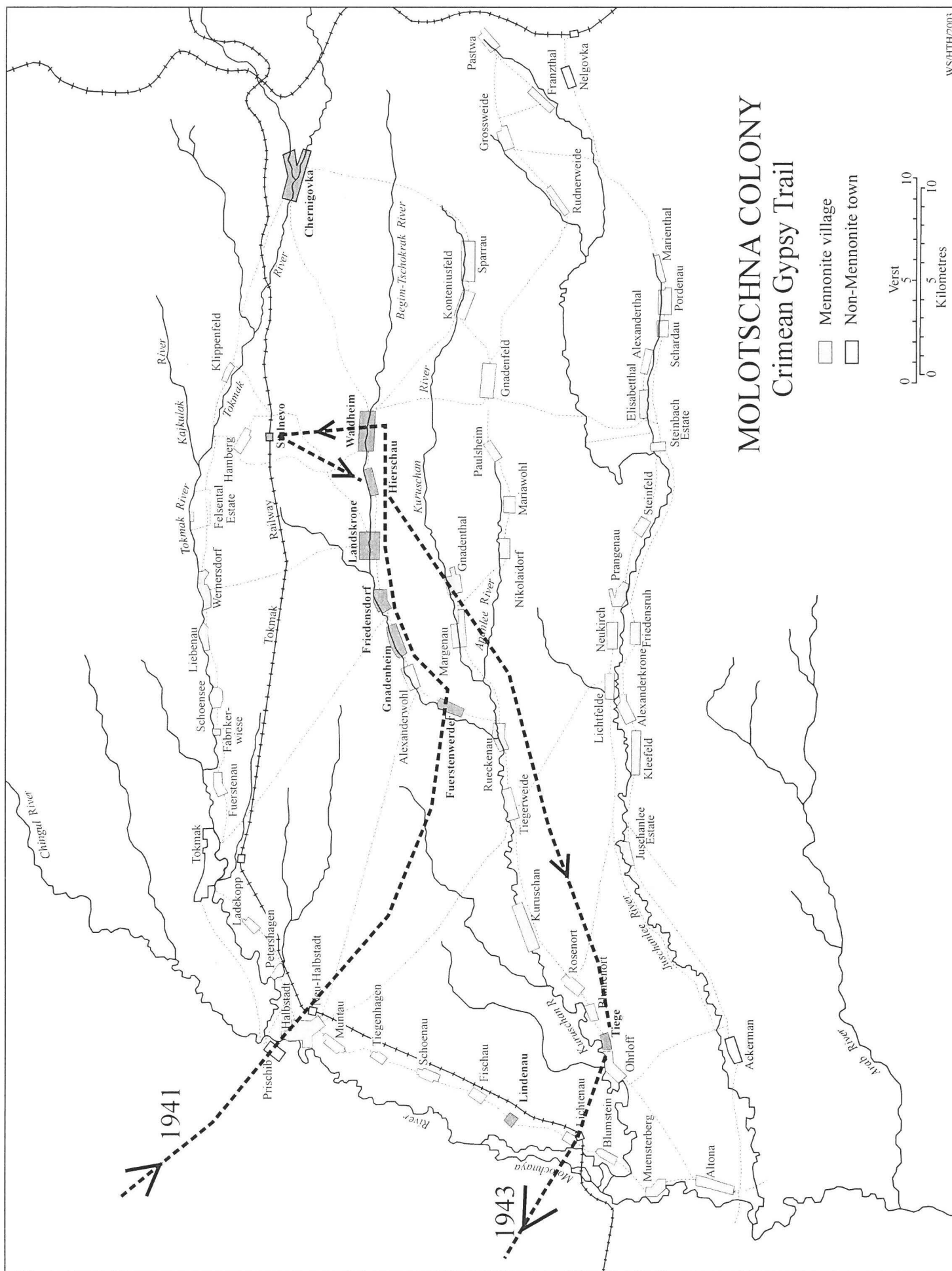
Some of the Tschongraw group moved in with relatives in the surrounding villages, the Abram Hildebrand family staying with Warkentin relatives in Lindenau. In the creamery each family chose a corner of a room in which to sleep. Since they had no furniture, and very little in the way of belongings, and no blankets, they slept on straw and used their coats to cover up against the night cold. The refugees scoured the surrounding fields, and found a few tomatoes which the frost had spared. These made excellent sauce on the potatoes they managed to dig out. Cooked in tin cans the food was enough to make them thank their heavenly father that he had saved them from the hand of the enemy.

Probably because the refugees had very little, and what they possessed they had begged for, the Hierschauer's nick-named the Tschongraw group "*Daut Kjrimsche Tsigjonep*" (**Die Krimmer Zegeuner, or the Crimean Gypsies**). In Hierschau the local population was itself struggling for existence, so there was little surplus food, fuel or other provisions for the "Gypsies."

The Soviets had not been able to complete the evacuation in the Hierschau-Waldheim region, but had been more successful in other areas of the Molotschna. Ohrloff, Tiege, Blumenort and Rosenort were found virtually abandoned. In Tiege there remained only one man and a few Russian families. Even food had been left standing in some of the houses. The "Crimean Gypsies" decided to move to Tiege. A wagon was loaded with all their worldly possessions, their meagre supplies of bedding, pots and tin cans, burned wheat and potatoes. The Tschongraws had arrived in Hierschau on October 6, then moved into their more expanded new home October 26, 1941. They stayed in Tiege for almost two years.

But even the home in Tiege was only a temporary stop. The Russian Army was now pushing back the German forces, so eventually the front came closer and closer to the Molotschna. On September 12, 1943 everyone was advised to flee westward. Their possessions again loaded onto wagons, the "Crimean Gypsies" joined the long stream of refugees of the "Great Trek." Eventually, after tremendous hardships, they reached the Warthegau region of Poland in February 1944, then in January 1945, fled even further west, many of the Tschongawers reaching the zones of Allied occupation.

A substantial number of Tschongraws now live in Canada, and at one time fifteen were members of the Portage Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg.



MENNONITE ALTERNATE SERVICE

MENNONITE ALTERNATE SERVICE IN CRIMEA

In the Mennonite negotiations with the Russian government regarding service to be offered instead of direct military involvement after the humbling defeat of the Crimean War, a number of avenues of alternate services were discussed. Various types of work in the forest regions was one option (*Forsteidiens*t). Medical services (*Sanitaetsdienst*) was another way in which Mennonites could participate, especially in times of war.

The *Forsteidiens*t began in 1880, with 1,000 Mennonite men being drafted. In short order there were eight forestry camps in southern Ukraine, most of them fairly close to the Mennonite colonies. It is not specifically mentioned in most of the literature, but there are pictures of Mennonite men participating in forestry work and road construction projects in Crimea. New roads were built in the mountainous regions of the south, and existing roads were widened. There does not seem to be a record of nor pictures of Mennonite men actually planting trees in Crimea. There is no specific record of a forestry camp in Crimea, although the men working in southern parts of Crimea must have had some facilities for sleeping.

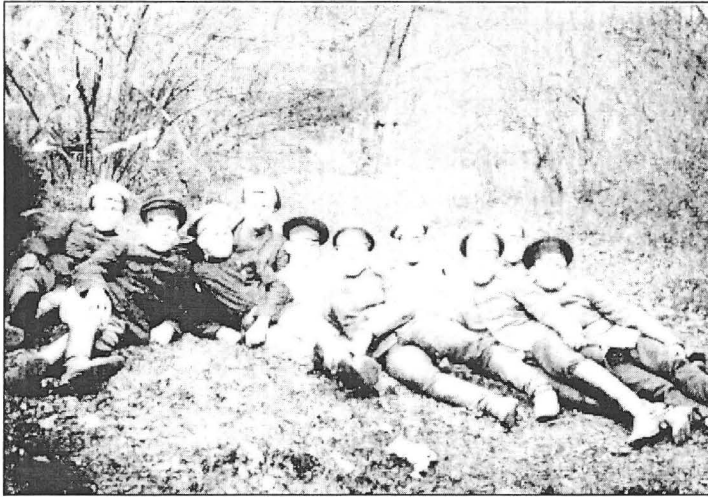
Part of the *Forsteidiens*t was combating the phylloroxea infestation in the vineyards of southern Crimea. It is not certain when this aspect of the work began, but it seems to have been in operation by 1886. Peter C Heidebrecht was drafted as a Phylloroxea Commando in that year. The little aphid like insect was actually introduced to a number of areas in southern Russia and Crimea, but the Mennonite contribution to combat this destructive infestation was restricted to Crimea.

The men of the phylloroxea unit lived in tents which were rather primitive, since the work required frequent moving around to the different areas. Since the men had no training for the work they were sent to Odessa, where infestation by this insect was also found. Here they were taught about this insect, learned how to spray the plants, and the dissection of the roots so that they could be examined under magnification. Severely infected plants, particularly their roots, were then dug up and destroyed. The men of the unit worked only six months in the summer, presumably because that was the most effective time of the year to combat the infestation.

There was no obvious battlefield contribution by the *Sanitaetsdienst*, even in time of war. There were, however, a considerable number of nurses, male and female, who worked at hospitals in Simferopol. There are pictures of groups of nurses taken in 1915 in Simferopol, during World War I. It is presumed that the wounded from the battlefield were transferred there for further extended care.

As well, a number of other men were drafted directly into the *Sanitaetsdienst*. Abram Jakob Klassen, businessman and minister, was drafted at the outbreak of World War I. He first served in Simferopol, then in a sanatorium in Szaki, a spa in Crimea. Johann Johann Wiebe, teacher and minister, was drafted into the All-Russian branch of the Semstwo *Sanitaetsdienst*, also at the onset of World War I. He served for three years. Abraham Heinrich Unruh, teacher and minister, served as a medical orderly from 1915-1918, before he moved to Crimea to teach at the Karassan *Zentralschule*.

Mennonite Alternate Service in Crimea

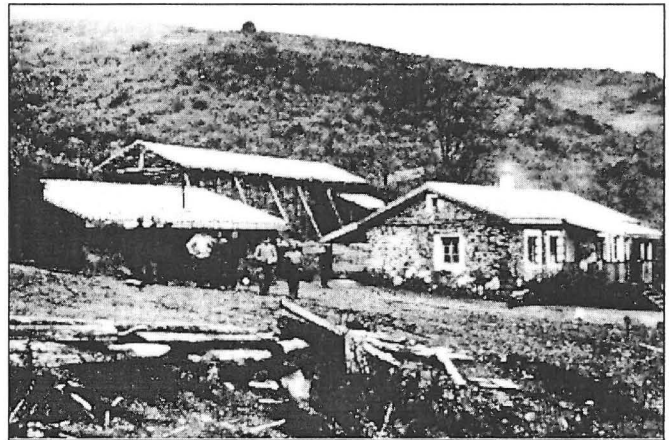


Forestry workers in Crimea

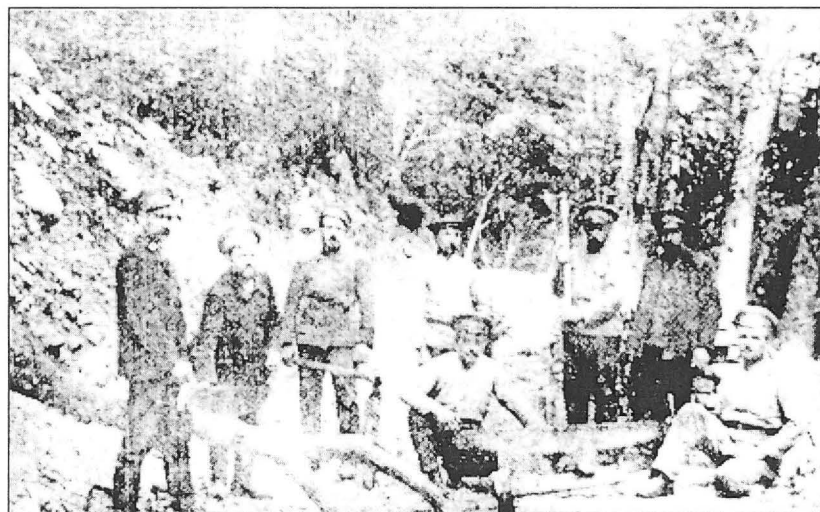
Part of the *Forsteidienst* in Crimea consisted of actual forestry work and working on the roads, especially in the southern mountainous regions



Road construction in Crimea



The home of the forester



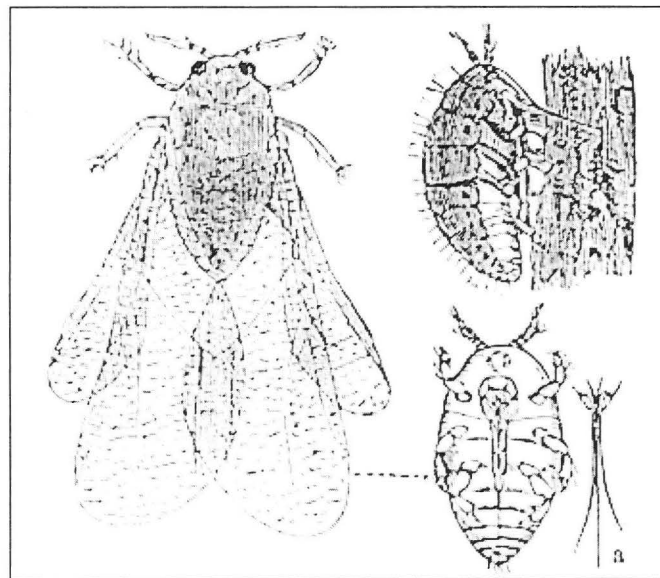
Road construction in Crimea



Mennonite men on road construction during World War I



Phylloxera team heading out with shovels and pick-axes



Grape Phylloxera

Medical Personnel in Simferopol in 1915



Mennonite nurses serving in Simferopol during World War I



Medical Corps in Simferopol 1915. Front row l to r, Anna Wiens, Anna Dyck, the next nurse Helena Kroeker, then Abram Friesen

THE YALTA CONFERENCE

THE YALTA CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 4-11, 1945

The Yalta Conference was the second war-time meeting of the heads of government of the United States, represented by president Franklin D. Roosevelt, Great Britain, represented by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and the Soviet Union represented by the General Secretary Joseph Stalin. It was held in the Livadia Palace, near Yalta in Crimea.

The conference started off with lies. Stalin wanted the conference to be in Crimea, ostensibly because his doctors had told him that he should not travel too far. The real reason was that the Soviets wanted to “bug” the rooms of the other participants.

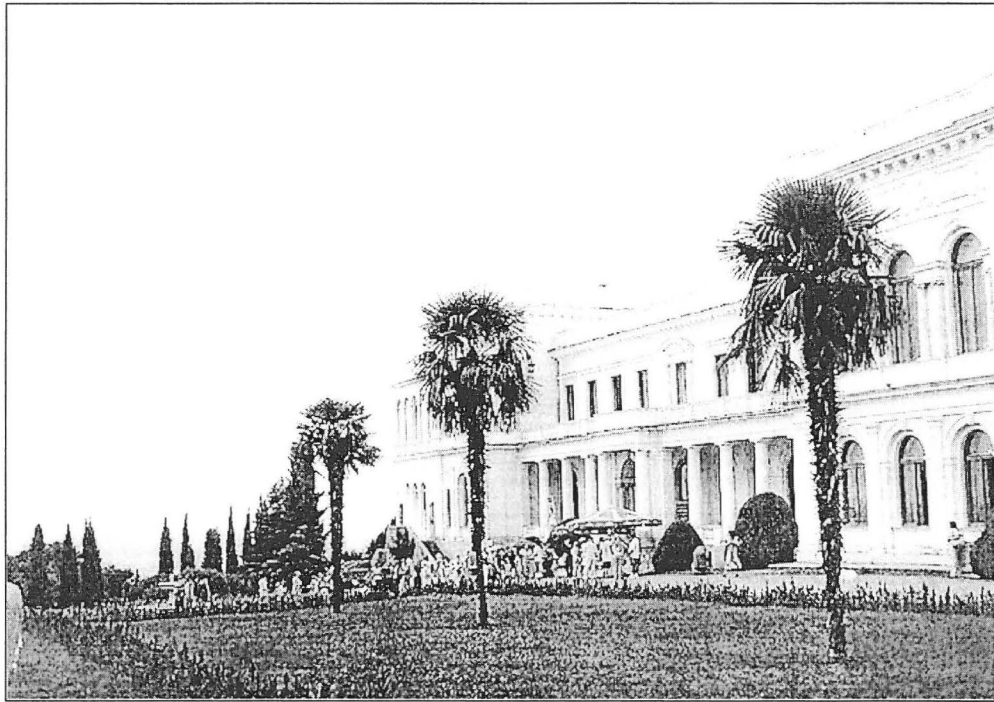
The principal intention of the conference was to discuss the re-establishment of the nations of war-torn Europe after the close of hostilities. Yalta was the second of the wartime conferences, the first having been the Tehran Conference of November 28 - December 1 in 1943; it was later followed by the Potsdam Conference of July 17- August 2, 1945. Besides the main agenda, each leader also had a number of pet projects and operated on a number of suppositions. Roosevelt foolishly felt that he could get Stalin to do almost anything he wanted. He asked for Soviet support in the American Pacific War against Japan and wanted the Soviets to join the United Nations. Churchill very much wanted free elections and democratic governments in Central and Eastern Europe. Stalin made all kinds of promises to allow the development of democratic governments in Eastern Europe, but never allowed any country any freedom, and eventually enslaved most of central and all of eastern Europe for over forty years. The “Iron Curtain” did not come down until the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1989.

Key points discussed were:

1. Demand for unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany
2. Germany would undergo demilitarization and denazification
3. Nazi war criminals were to be hunted down and brought to justice.
4. At the conclusion of the war, Germany and Berlin were to be divided into zones. After some adjustment, the American, French, British and Russian zones were designated, both in Germany as a whole, and in Berlin (see maps)
5. German reparations, partly in the form of forced labour
6. Polish borders shifted westward. Some eastern sections of Poland were simply annexed by Russia, while western territory was taken from Germany and incorporated into Poland. Churchill alone pushed for free elections in Poland
7. Citizens fleeing from the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were to be handed back to their respective countries regardless of their consent. It took several years until the Americans and British discovered that this was actually a form of enslavement of people who had desperately wanted to escape the brutality of Stalin’s holocaust. Many Mennonites were caught in this net and were sent to the far north or Siberia, only to die slow lingering deaths
8. It was agreed that democracies would be established in all liberated European and former Axis satellite countries. Order would be restored, and there would be free elections. It soon became apparent that none of this would happen in any territory occupied by Stalin’s forces.



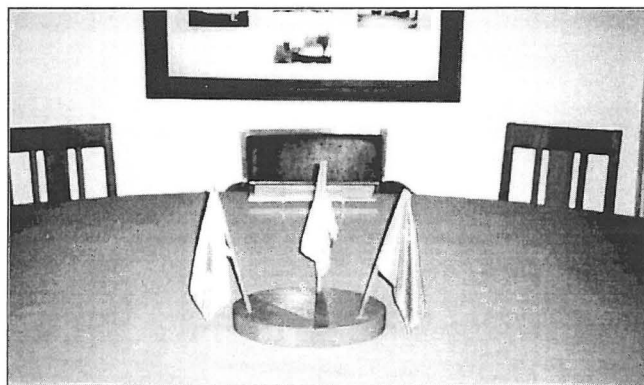
Big Three at the Yalta Conference - Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin



Livadia Palace at Yalta

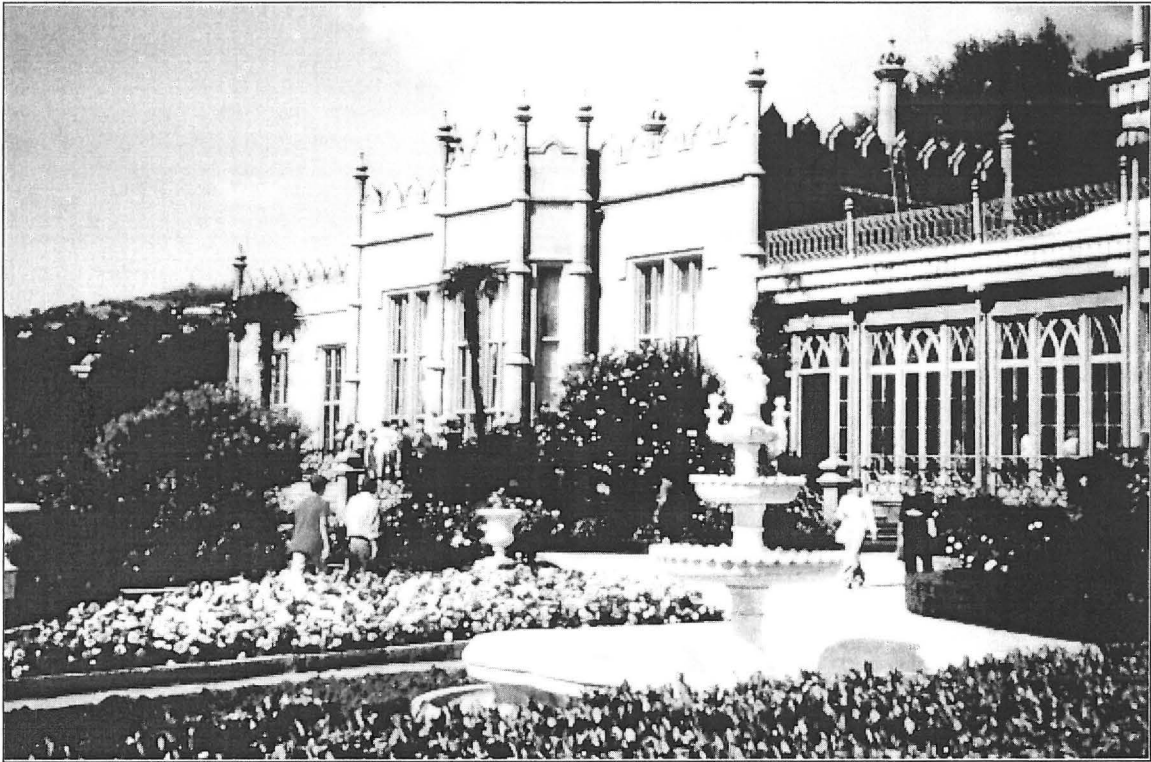


Yalta Conference meeting table in Livadia Palace

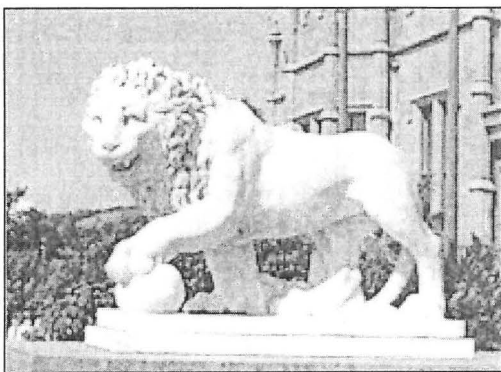


Yalta Conference meeting table in Livadia Palace
British, American and Soviet flags

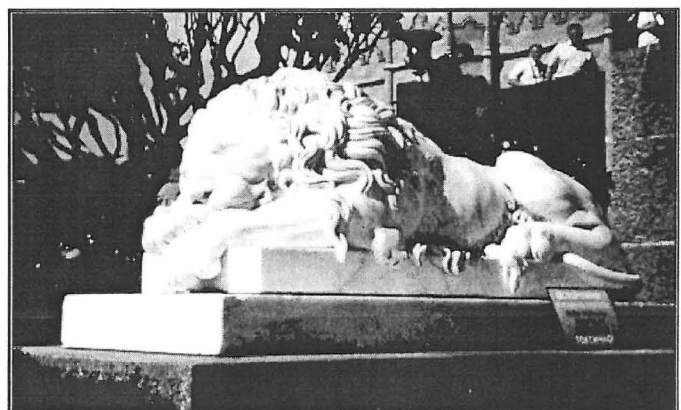
Alupka Palace, used to house some of the guests who
participated in the Yalta Conference



Alupka Palace, or Vorontsov Palace, built 1828-1848 for use as the summer residence of Mikhail Vorontsov. Built in the English Tudor style

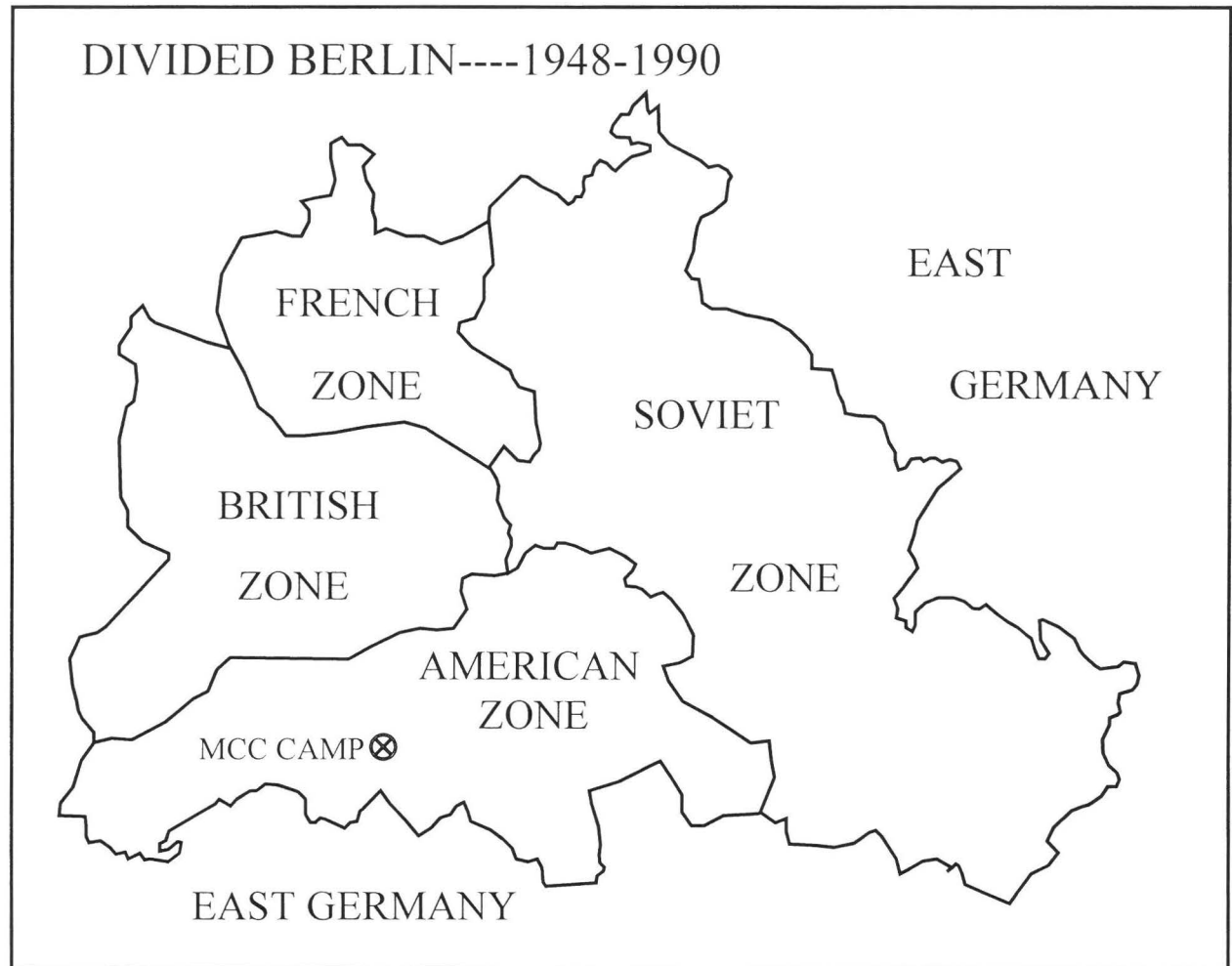


One of six Medici lions decorating the grounds of Alupka Palace



One of the six Medici Lions at Alupka Palace was sleeping. Stalin remarked that this possibly represented the sleeping British Empire





BERLIN ESCAPE

JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 1, 1947

Yalta is a beautiful Crimean resort city on the shore of the Black Sea. Here the major leaders of the Allies, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, met on February 4-11, 1945, to decide the fate of Europe after the demanded “unconditional surrender” of Nazi Germany would go in to effect. A few words and signatures affected the lives of millions of people, condemning many to endless suffering or death. The Elbe River was designated as one of the dividing lines between East and West. There were to be American, British, French and Russian zones of occupation. Berlin itself, while well within the Russian zone, would also be divided into similar zones. The principle of repatriation of citizens was accepted. The assumption was that of course all displaced people would want to return to their country of origin. It did not seem to enter the thinking of the Western Allies that there might be thousands, likely millions of refugees who would rather escape from their oppressive “homes.”

When the war ended it finally dawned on some of the occupying forces that the relationship between the Soviets and many of the displaced refugees was anything but cordial! The Russians were, of course, sending everyone from within their own zone back to their homes or into exile. They were also swooping through the western zones and repatriating citizens, usually definitely against their will, and often by force. The American military then began putting into force the actual stipulations of the Yalta Conference. This clearly stated that forced repatriation could only take place for those refugees found in German military uniforms, those who had deserted the Soviet armed forces after the start of the war, those who had provided direct aid to the German military, and those who had committed war crimes. The Soviets would have to provide written proof of these charges in each individual case.

A continual problem for refugees in the confusion of post-war Europe was that few knew the actual facts of the Yalta Conference. The newly restated guidelines were not effectively enforced until early in 1946, and certainly were not common knowledge among the refugees. The Soviets, knowing both, tended to ignore them whenever they could get away with it. Rumour and fear abounded.

While many of the 35,000 Mennonites who had managed to get to central Europe on the Great Trek were forcibly repatriated, there were still those who had escaped the Soviet net, even in the Eastern zones.

It is in this context that the “Berlin Escape” occurred.

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John Kroeker, son of the Russian Mennonite theologian, Jakob Kroeker, had moved to the United States, and married there. He returned to Germany in 1939 to visit his aging

parents, then was unable to leave because of the start of the war. He had lived in Berlin since 1940, working for the SS in some clerical capacity. In 1944 he visited many of the recently arrived Mennonite evacuees, likely in the Warthegau area. At the end of the war he continued his contacts with the Russian Mennonite refugees, and worked hard to register as many of them as he could. He established a small office in Berlin, called it the "Menno Centre," and gave himself the title of "Provisional Representative of the Mennonite Central Committee." Through his personal contacts and extensive travel throughout the Soviet zone Kroeker managed to collect a large number of refugees in the relative safety of the American zone. He had a card printed with his name and office on it, which seemed to function as identity card to help the refugees in their travels. Kroeker housed the increasing number of refugees in a partially destroyed building at Viktoria Luise Platz, but also obtained help from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration [UNRRA], as well as the American and British military officials. He contacted the Mennonite Central Committee headquarters in North America. Kroeker, however, could not solve the long term problem for the Mennonites, especially arranging for transport to another country.

C. F. Klassen came to Berlin in December of 1945, and promised that the MCC would do what was possible, particularly in the sending of relief supplies. Robert Kreider visited in April of 1946 and negotiated with the American military authorities and with Kroeker. He pointed out that Kroeker could not be officially appointed by the MCC because of his blemished SS related work record, and his problem with alcohol. Kreider assumed that the American military was not about to turn the refugees over to the Soviets, despite the demands for repatriation. He also felt that someone needed to be appointed by the MCC to work on the only satisfactory long term solution, emigration.

In the meantime more and more refugees were collecting in Berlin. A total of 211 had been admitted to a UNRRA camp in Zehlendorf in Berlin, but more were arriving at Viktoria Luise Platz all the time, by June of 1946 another 125.

One day Peter Dyck received a telephone call at the MCC office in Amsterdam. It was from an American, Lieutenant Colonel W. B. Stinson, Chief of the Displaced Persons division in Berlin. He had cut the red tape for Peter to get a temporary permit to come to Berlin to help solve the refugee problem. This would entail looking after the refugees while they were in Berlin, but more importantly arranging for a country for them to emigrate to, and transportation to get them there. Peter arrived in Berlin on June 12, 1946, his wife Elfrieda followed on July 4.

Peter and Elfrieda set about their almost unsurmountable task with enthusiasm. Elfrieda stayed at the camp, and played a key role in its day to day management. Peter tried to achieve the long term goals, making arrangements for the eventual emigration.

As the number of refugees grew, more and more housing was required. The American military simply took Peter to an area of Berlin and asked him which houses he wanted. The first was Ringstrasse 107, but eventually a total of 12 houses were needed for the camp. An office was arranged, a central kitchen was set up. Since they had no ovens, arrangements were made with a local baker to bake bread. His payment, much more useful than money, was with MCC flour. Obtaining relief supplies from the Amsterdam MCC warehouse was a problem until a deal was made with the Dutch Red Cross. Their

ambulances needed to go to Berlin to pick up patients, but they travelled there empty! So now they went to Berlin loaded with MCC supplies, then went back to Holland with patients. Refugee watchmen were arranged – who also kept an eye and an ear open to anyone who might be lurking on the surrounding streets. If they spoke *Plautdietsch* they were undoubtedly “ours.” Elfrieda worked on the menus, to vary them as much as possible within the scope of the MCC supplies.

There were 300 children in the camp, as well as refugee teachers. A bombed out school in the area was obtained. The teachers worked out curriculum and lesson plans. All children from age six to fifteen were in classes every week day. But there were no supplies. Younger students began by learning to count and memorizing the alphabet, the teachers illustrated history and geography to the older ones by telling stories of the countries they had come through. They memorized scripture passages and songs, and did mental arithmetic.

One of the smallest houses was converted into a hospital, with one room for men, another for women, one for children and one for infectious diseases. Refugee nurses and some additional girls volunteered their services. Seriously ill patients were sent to the regular city hospitals.

While Peter Dyck was not a minister, he was still asked to officiate at funerals, and even at a wedding. With continued stay at the camp religious life needed to be organized more officially. There were few ministers among the refugees, since they had been special targets of Communist suppression. Added to this was the complication of having two major groups represented – *Kirchliche* and Mennonite Brethren. A church council was elected consisting of five ministers, 3 *Kirchliche*, 2 Mennonite Brethren. After lengthy discussion it was decided that communion should be celebrated together, but that Peter Dyck should preside. They could not obtain wine or grape juice, and did not want to use ersatz coffee, milk or water, so they settled on something they could easily purchase at the US Army PX store – Coca Cola!

The group planned a Thanksgiving service, decorating an old gym. Sunday morning, November 21, 1946 was an exciting time. Children and young people recited poems, there was special music and a sermon. Even more special was the celebration of Christmas. The women obtained permission to use the bakery from 12 midnight to 4 AM to bake cookies and peppernuts. Dough was mixed in the camp kitchen, then every night a different group went for the special privilege of baking. Young adults made gifts for the children with the very limited tools and materials they had. Large boxes of gifts had also arrived from a Glick family in Pennsylvania. On Christmas Eve the choirs sang, youngsters recited poems, there was a short drama, the Christmas story was read from Luke chapter 2 and there was a sermon. For many of the younger people this was their first Christmas program ever. Two Americans, Colonel Stinson and Major Thompson, who were standing at the back of the gym, could not keep their eyes dry.

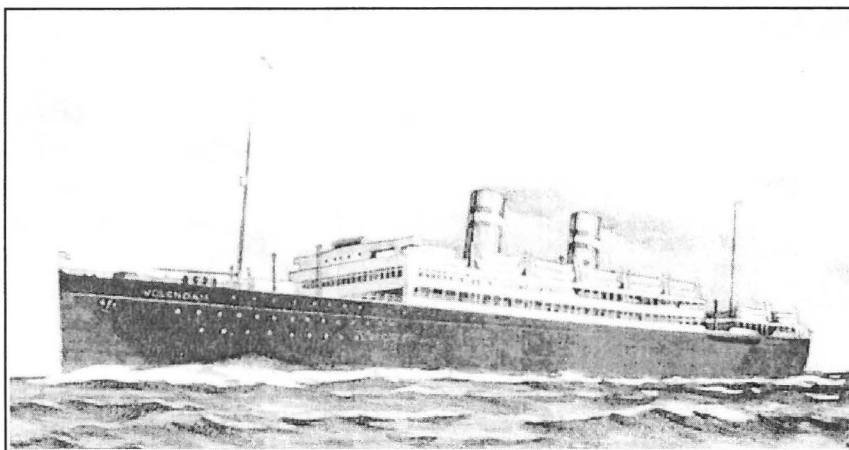
But the time had come to resettle the refugees. Peter Dyck had left no stone unturned for all possible negotiations, but there were difficulties at all levels – to get the refugees out of the Russian zone, to find a country for them to go to, and to find transportation to get them there. Dyck and Colonel Stinson sent in lists of the refugees to

the Russians, pointing out that if they could not individually prove that there were war criminals, deserters or collaborators they should, according to the Yalta Conference, be allowed to leave. Not a word from the Soviets.

In December of 1946, with an ever increasing number of mouths to feed, it was time for action. C. F. Klassen and Peter Dyck went to the US Army headquarters in Frankfurt. After a long meeting a three part deal was hammered out. The military would transport the refugees by train, through the Soviet zone, to any port in Europe that would be designated. The MCC would find a country that would accept the refugees, and would arrange for ocean transportation. As soon as the MCC was ready they were to notify Stinson, and "Operation Mennonite" would begin.

Klassen, Dyck and the MCC office in Akron, Pennsylvania, immediately went into action. First choice of the refugees was Canada, but Canada refused to accept them without careful individual scrutiny. The reactions of USA and Mexico were the same. Only poor Paraguay, having had good experience with previous Mennonite immigrants, accepted the challenge.

Now to find an ocean transport. Ships were hard to come by, a large amount of shipping having been sunk by submarines during the war. Finally, through the intervention of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, arrangements were made with the Holland-America



The Ocean Liner *Volendam*

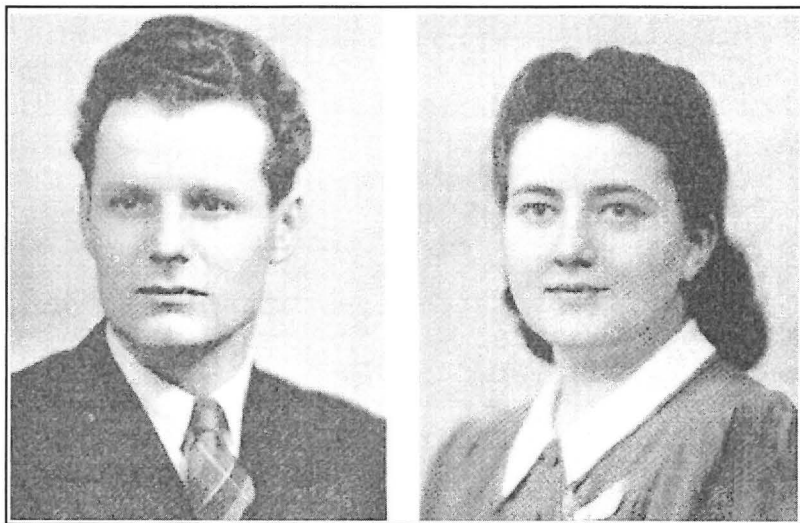
Line to charter the *Volendam*. The ship was large, with a capacity of several thousand passengers. The charter fee was \$375,000. The MCC would not, even if every Berlin refugee were aboard, send a ship across the ocean only half full. Dyck and Klassen went to the Funkkaserne camp operated by UNRRA at Munich and asked the Mennonite refugees if they were willing to go to Paraguay. Surprisingly there were soon 1,000 names on the list of those prepared to go. This thousand, plus several hundred from Holland and the Berlin refugees would nicely fill the *Volendam*. Things were falling into place.

Back in Berlin work started on preparing travel documents. Peter and Elfrieda were called in to see the American military, and the arrangements were confirmed. The military would obtain the train, the MCC would have the travel documents completed and have the people packed, ready to go – but to keep the plans secret. The following Sunday all the baggage was inspected just to be sure.

Six days later, on Saturday, Colonel Stinson called with the shattering news, "The

deal is off!” At a subsequent meeting Peter was informed that General Lucius Clay, a higher ranking four-star general, had called off the deal. Peter drafted a careful letter to General Clay, pointing out the events that had led up to the situation, mentioning that in 400 years of Mennonite history there had been key individuals that had determined the fate of many people. He requested that General Clay now be the person to help the 1,200 refugees trapped in Berlin. Peter hand delivered the letter to General Clay’s office, and waited. After an hour or two he was invited in. Clay pointed out the risks of an “incident” if the train rescue were attempted, with the possible loss of lives. Airlift was discussed, but when all the obstacles were reviewed, was abandoned. Finally the mutually agreed upon decision was to consult Washington. The answer came back quickly, “You have permission to move the Mennonite refugees, who are Russian citizens, through the Soviet zone, provided the Russians agree.” Was this a “yes” or a “no”? Would the Russians ever agree?

Then Peter and Elfrieda went back to the refugees in Berlin and outlined what had happened. The meeting began with prayer, then Peter discussed the problem, breaking down crying. Three hundred or so refugees had already boarded the *Volendam* before it left Rotterdam for Bremerhaven. A train was carrying 1,000 refugees north from Munich, and they were to board the ship at



Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, pictures from an MCC brochure printed in 1946

Bremerhaven. As it stood the Berlin group would obviously not reach Bremerhaven. Peter was comforted by the very disappointed refugees. Some spoke of God’s leading in their lives, of the blessed time they had in Berlin, and that they ought not despair.

The next morning Peter took a train to Bremerhaven. The *Volendam* was already docked, with the Dutch refugees and MCC personnel on board. Soon the Munich train arrived and those refugees were added to the passengers. Would the *Volendam* have to leave half empty? Should the MCC find other refugees to fill the empty berths? The captain announced that he was ready to lift anchor. But there was still time – they had 36 hours in port before penalties had to be paid. The people were gathered on the top deck for a farewell service – without the Berlin group. It was to be a joyous occasion, but the singing was half-hearted, with many people crying. C. F. Klassen and Peter found it hard to find appropriate words.

Meanwhile in Berlin Elfrieda had tried to carry on. Sadness overshadowed all

activities in the camp. At a meeting with Colonel Stinson, Elfrieda was asked that just in case they should still go, how long would it take the refugees to be ready? "Just give me one hour!" she replied.

That evening the people asked Elfrieda around supper time if it would be alright to have a prayer meeting. "That's a very good idea," she answered. The refugees earnestly prayed for a miracle. The *Volendam* was to leave the next day, so only a miracle would do! That night, as Elfrieda was going from house to house she noticed an elderly man, a Mr. Sawatzky, setting his suitcases out into the corridor. She asked him what he was doing. He replied that since he had prayed for a miracle he may as well get ready for it to happen. Word of Sawatzky's faith spread, so others also began packing.

The next day, Thursday, January 30, Colonel Stinson called early in the morning. General Clay was going to see Marshal Sokolovsky, his Russian military counterpart, that day. Stinson suggested that Elfrieda should stay in her apartment near the telephone. Finally at 3:40 PM a call came from Captain Allen, General Clay's secretary, asking for Peter Dyck. Told that he was in Bremerhaven, she hung up. If they could not reach Peter Dyck there, they would call back.

In Bremerhaven the joyless farewell service had just concluded when about 4 PM two American Military Police came marching up. "Are you Mr. Dyck?" they asked. They took him down the gangplank, onto a jeep and to a hotline telephone at their harbor post. The woman on the telephone asked if the *Volendam* was still there. "Yes," Peter replied, "the *Volendam* is still here..." "Can you hold it?" she asked, "...your Mennonite people in Berlin are cleared. They can go along on your ship. Just hold it. Wait for them!" Peter raced back to the ship with the news. The captain was asked to delay departure until further notice. Peter announced over the ship intercom so everyone could hear, "God is now going to do a miracle. The Berlin group is coming!"

Then Peter and a number of others hopped onto a car and raced for Berlin, happy that the autobahn had no speed limit. They were stopped at the Border crossing at Helmstedt. "Is one of you Peter Dyck?" enquired the British officer. "I have a message for you," he continued, "The train is gone." Nothing more. Not sure of exactly what was meant they raced on.

In Berlin Elfrieda had waited. Since nothing seemed to be happening, and it was almost 6 PM, she ran warm water for a bath. The telephone rang. It was Colonel Stinson's secretary. "You are to report to headquarters immediately!" When she got to the office over the icy streets she was ushered in. Ten or twelve officers were already in the room. Stinson said, "Mrs. Dyck, you probably won't even want to sit down before I tell you what it's all about. The Mennonites are leaving Berlin tonight. You asked for one hour to get your people ready; I'll give you one and a half." He continued, "At 8:00 PM tonight you will have all your people with their baggage standing outside their houses. Army trucks will pick them up and take them to the railroad station Lichterfelde West. Please have men organized into work groups to help with the loading and unloading of the baggage...and please tell your people to be quiet: if possible no talking in the streets."

Stinson then announced to the men in the room, "This is Operation Mennonite, and two things are of utmost importance: speed and a low profile." Lichterfelde West railroad

station was to be cordoned off, twelve ten-ton trucks were to report to Ringstrasse 107 not later than 8:00 PM. Two days rations were to be made available for 1,115 passengers. Large cans were to be supplied so that each train car had an "emergency" toilet. As Elfrieda was leaving the office C. F. Klassen telephoned. He informed her that Peter was on his way to Berlin.

Elfrieda sped to the camp; she had to notify 1,115 people in a hurry. At the first house everything was dark – electricity had been turned off in that sector of the city to conserve energy. In the darkness she informed the refugees of the good news. God had answered their prayers! Now they had to abandon their half eaten suppers and pack in darkness, to be ready with their suitcases, out on the street, by 8 PM. All the houses and the sick bay were notified, and work gangs were organized. The group was ready when the trucks and two ambulances arrived. One ambulance was sent to a city hospital to pick up a Mrs. Janzen, who was on the maternity ward, in labour. Perhaps the appearance of the soldiers frightened her so much that the labour pains stopped. She delivered a week later.

A technical problem delayed departure. The trucks were too big. They could not turn around at the railroad station, so smaller ones were sent for. Then one of them developed a flat tire, and blocked the way to the station. Robert Kreider was at the station, fitting batteries into forty flashlights, to be distributed to the forty boxcars. He telephoned the border with the message for Peter Dyck, that the train was leaving. Stinson and Elfrieda went back to the camp to make sure that nobody was left. Every house was empty. They arrived back at the station; all the people were on board. Departure was set for 12 midnight.

Having received the message of the train departure at Helmstedt, Peter had continued on to Berlin. When he arrived at Ringstrasse 107 it was empty. He and his companions woke up the German housekeeper at the office and asked her to cook them a fast meal. They were going to head back to Bremerhaven, hopefully beating the train to its destination. Suddenly the telephone rang. It was Robert Kreider. "We're at the Lichterfelde West railroad station. If you hurry you'll make the train," he said. Rushing past the astonished house keeper, who had plates full of food in her hands, they headed for the station. Peter greeted Colonel Stinson and jumped onto the train.

Large loaves of bread were stacked inside the boxcars. There were bails of straw and cans of water. Stove pipes stuck through the partially open doors. Just behind the locomotive was the only passenger car, with the sick people and Elfrieda on it. Moments after Peter boarded there was a short whistle, a jerk, and they were off! It was 2 AM, Friday, January 31.

Peter Reimer, a 17 year old boy at the time, remembers that evening. "The last evening we were eating supper. Suddenly, bang, it came. You can go! It didn't take long. The military trucks came by and we were loaded on, and away we went to the train station. We were loaded onto train boxcars. An American soldier was standing at the door of each car. The train left late in the evening."

The train stopped; it was bright sunshine outside. Peter jumped out of the train and landed knee-deep in snow. He inquired of the engineer where they were. "Helmstedt," he answered. Peter asked "...how far are we from the border?" The engineer replied, "Two metres...if I go two more metres my cow catcher will be in the British zone." Peter then

wondered out loud if it would not be possible to go ahead just a little further. He received a long lecture about the meaning of red and green lights, and that there was the additional safety of a little arm that gave signals. Peter suddenly thought that even engineers might be hungry, and tossed him a few loaves of bread. He still did not move the train, but was much more friendly.

Up ahead on other tracks the Dycks could see men wearing heavy coats and broad lapels checking the trains, car by car. What would these Soviet inspectors say when they reached the Mennonite refugees?

Then there was a click. The arm came down, and the light turned green! The engineer nodded and reached for the throttle. A slight jerk, and the train moved ahead. Peter jumped onto the train, and it moved ahead perhaps half a mile, then stopped. They were now in the British zone. Peter jumped off the train again and ran from boxcar to boxcar. "We are out!" he shouted forty times. The entire train started singing "*Nun danket alle Gott*" [Now Thank We All Our God].

By 2:30 AM the next morning the train pulled alongside the *Volendam* in Bremerhaven. It was decided to let the passengers and the ship crew sleep until morning. They boarded early on Saturday, February 1. This time it was truly a happy event. Each person received a hot steaming mug of cocoa, and was escorted to the appropriate berth. The Munich and Holland groups were eager to meet their relatives and friends. In all, of the 1,115 people who escaped from Berlin, 928 boarded the *Volendam* for Paraguay, the others remaining in West Germany. At 4 PM on February 1 the *Volendam* lifted anchor and sailed out of Bremerhaven, heading for Buenos Aires. On board were 2,203 refugees, accompanied by Peter and Elfrieda Dyck.

Siegfried Janzen stayed in Berlin to clean up after the hurried departure. MCC food supplies were disposed of. Houses were de-requisitioned, and arrangements were made for any late stragglers who might show up.

Peter Dyck sent a letter of thanks to General Lucius D. Clay, and received this reply, "Your letter of 9 July made me very happy, not because I was able in a small way to help the Mennonite refugees to leave Berlin, but to know they have found a home. They are fine people and deserve the opportunity to live as free men."

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To Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, and to the 1,115 Mennonite refugees, it appeared that God had directly intervened, and had done a miracle. The Red Sea had been parted and crossed. Exactly how God accomplished this miracle is not certain. Others feel that there is a logical explanation of the anatomy of this miracle. The best explanation is that God did a miracle, and used ordinary human beings to do it!

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Villages, estates or people with **bold** numbers indicate that this is the prime description of that item or person

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